WHAT MANNER OF MAN

EDNA KENTON

K

ia

40

Miss Mary Parks I send
you this Book with Love
Aunde Ean

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/whatmannerofman00kentiala

WHAT MANNER OF MAN

WHAT MANNER OF MAN

By EDNA KENTON

THE BOBBS-MERRILL COMPANY
INDIANAPOLIS PUBLISHERS

Copyright, 1903
The Bowen-Merrill Company

March

PRESS OF
BRAUNWORTH & CO.
BOOKBINDERS AND PRINTERS
BROOKLYN, N. Y.

TO MY FATHER

2229070

WHAT MANNER OF MAN

It was a clear midsummer day. High noon was making havoc of subdued light and shade in Thayer's studio, and his sitter, who had been there since nine o'clock, was growing momently more impatient.

"You've always said you wanted me to come at the same time for the sake of the same light," she said at length with more than a touch of lazy impertinence, while by a requested turn of her head she exaggerated to hideousness a lurking shadow in the corner of her mouth. "Too far? Then give me a photographer's prop, and stick me up against it." She moved her head carefully back, however. "What I was going to say," she went on, "was that early morning light is emphatically not noon glare, and I'm worn to fiddle strings."

Thayer made no reply unless an annoyed contraction of the brows could be called one. It seemed to content his sitter, however, for she laughed with a sort of tame satisfaction, and then sighed to herself as the warmth of the day pressed more and more upon her.

In a few minutes Thayer spoke. "That's all," he said absently. Mrs. Davenport rose languidly to the top notch of her magnificent height and undisguisedly "stretched." She hid a slow, lazy yawn in the curve of her elbow, and moved over to a great shadowy window at one end of the studio—that end which overlooked the avenue. Beneath the window was a low couch covered with prayer rugs and heaped high with oriental pillows in whose embroideries lay concealed from Western eyes all sorts of quaint Eastern proverbs and petitions. She sank carelessly down on all the mysticism strewn so lavishly over the divan, and for a while looked unseeingly down on the listless travel of a London summer noon.

Behind her Kirk Thayer painted with all the tense eagerness that comes with the nearing to completion of some well loved work. At last he

bent and wrote his name in thin vermilion letters along the lower left-hand corner.

"Come, Hilda," he called in that aimlessly pitched tone that shows ignorance of the nearness or farness of the person addressed. "Come, Hilda. It's done, done!"

He raised himself, and straightened his shoulders with a deep-drawn breath. Then he looked about him for his subject. She was coming to him across the floor, her bronze velvet gown making a rusty shine wherever the light caught it. He turned back to the easel and gave it a quick twist to the left.

"That's better," he said. "Ah, isn't she a raving darling, my Portrait of a Lady! That neck line, Hilda! For a little while after I got that I forgot there was a face to follow. And the baffling eyes, and that darling upper lip. That's a trick pure and simple, a dirty, Irish shenanigan trick! That foreshortening to the left does it; makes you look like one of the Furies compressed like baled hay. Ah, you beauty, you beauty!"

Hilda Davenport stood before her portrait in silence, trying to crush down the swift anger

that had leaped to life within her at first sight of the finished likeness. That any man should dare to see her so, and so daring, should go further in his boldness and paint her hidden soul upon a stretch of canvas! For that she was looking on her naked self she did not try to deny. From day to day she had watched the likeness grow, and had caught Thayer's thought of portrayal, but within the last hour some flash of insight must have guided the artist in his final strokes, some insight that had miraculously vitalized the whole conception.

In its way the portrait was a simple thing. There was no involved pose, no elaborate background, nothing to lure the eye from the face that looked out from the canvas. And in its very simplicity lay the highest demands of art. There was nothing to hide bad drawing, nothing that loud-pedaled, or slurred over faults. There was an almost insistent bareness about the whole thing.

The color note, if there was a color note in the monotony of it, was bronze. There was the bronze gown that, after all, because it merely draped the shoulders and then blended into the

background, hardly counted. There was the wonderful bronze hair that was like no other hair that ever crowned a woman's head. There was the bronzy background, remarkable as all of Thayer's backgrounds were. There were the eyes that when all was told made, with the mouth, the portrait. The eyes were bronze, too, for in real life they were chameleon eyes that took on their color from their surroundings. Under ordinary colorless circumstances they were brilliant blue; now from their environment they had topaz gleams in them. From no point of view could the spectator fasten with his eyes the eyes of this pictured woman. From out the bareness of the canvas they looked through and beyond every gazer into the space of an infinite solitude, into the solitude of an infinite woe.

And the mouth smiled, resolutely, bravely. Something in the drawing of the upper lip, of the spirited nose, suggested a great contempt for the blind folly of the world, a grim humor that had to come with the far-sightedness of the clear-seeing eyes, a humor that the shallow ones call cynicism; yet it was all only a suggestion,

for the many, no sooner come than gone; and what promised to be a great discovery was for the average spectator quickly lost in the haunting loveliness of the smiling lips, and the mystery of the great eyes that persistently shunned the gaze of the curious.

She turned away from it at last with a little shiver. "No one ever before—" She stopped abruptly. Thayer turned to her with a remarkable flash in his eyes.

"Yes!" he said, an exultant thrill in his voice. "It's your living soul that's caught there. Not another man in all the world knows you well enough, even if he had the power," he added with the daring assurance of genius, "to put that look into your eyes, that haunting sob about your mouth. I thank you, my dear, for this that you have given me. And now—" he bent toward her eagerly with a sudden tenseness about his eyes.

Mrs. Davenport laid her firm hand upon his breast and pushed him back from her.

"I have told you not to mention that to me again," she said. Her lips were smiling, but there was a look in her eyes that removed her

remark from the realm of trivialities. She turned back to the portrait.

"I don't want to tell you yet what I think of all this," she said with a queer gravity that she could not explain to herself. "When am I to have it?"

Thayer was screwing up his eyes at the painting. "When are you to have it?" he repeated absently. "Oh, not for a year or two; not before it's exhibited, and that won't be till next spring. It's aching hard to wait."

Mrs. Davenport stared sadly at her painted presentment. "It's too real," she said at last with almost a tremble in her voice. "I am wondering if I give you my consent to show it."

"Most of our contemporaries on this delightful earth are muttonheads, Hilda," said Thayer cheerfully. "They will be lost in the 'tone,' the 'symphonic color key,' the 'chiaroscuro'! Scarcely one of them will see beyond the layers of visible paint." Then he took her forcibly away to another part of the room.

"How do you care for that interior as far as it goes?" he asked briefly.

They were standing before a large canvas,

unfinished. Hilda looked with great interest at the sketched-in plot. Thayer's whole manner underwent a subtile change. His assurance changed to pleading. His hand fairly shook as he struck at one spot on the canvas.

"There's where my high light comes," he said nervously. "I wake any time in the night and wonder about it, whether I can get her figure vigorous enough against this or that. I put in dark here and light there. I scraped it all out dozens of times and went at it again before a drop of paint went on the real canvas. Three nights ago I got to the point of absolutely clear conception on the whole thing. All I need now is my model, Hilda." Thayer's voice had an eager thrill in it.

Mrs. Davenport stooped for her length of velvet train. "I really must be going," she said lightly with a conventionality so palpable that the next moment she laughed. "My dear Kirk, don't make me think you are still at that stage where you can cry wildly and unappeasedly for the green cheese of the fickle moon. You aren't ready for your model anyhow. Wait; perhaps you will run across her when you least expect it.

And by the way,"—she motioned toward the completed portrait,—"since this lady is out of the way, you and I are both at liberty some days sooner than we thought we'd be. If the Frenches and Captain Osbourne and the rest can start just as well day after to-morrow, why can't we be on the high seas then instead of hanging about London a week for nothing?"

"I presume we can," said Thayer almost sulkily as he rolled his canvas back against the wall, and put out of possible harm's way his just finished picture. Mrs. Davenport laughed at his petulance.

"You make me think of all the children I ever knew rolled into one," she said as she slipped her arm within his and drew him toward the door. "Come now. In just a few days I shall give you views that will turn your brain; color that will make your reason totter on its dainty throne, if all that Mr. Davenport has told me of this strange North Sea be true; and then, when you see some new wild beauty and a mass of color that is unearthly, let's call it quits."

"I don't know a crazier scheme in the universe than this one of yours," volunteered Thayer

with somewhat brutal frankness as they went downstairs. "What on earth should you choose to take this trip for when you have the Mediterranean, the—"

"The Mediterranean has been sailed over till it's worn smooth," she retorted. "I want new things, and one can't find them by following the bell-wether of the worldly flock. Ever since Harry went on that madcap chase up north I've wanted to go, too; and now I am going, and if you care to you may come along. If you don't—"

"The crazy part of your scheme is not the North Sea," he answered her half irritably. Thayer was always worn out mentally and physically upon the completion of any important work. "It's that beggarly island, with a lot of beggarly beggars on it. Who ever heard of the place or the man you want to see!"

"My husband." Mrs. Davenport made answer with a tilt to her head and a lilt to her voice. "You are inviting a broil when you speak so of his greatest hero." She stopped near a side corridor on the floor below. "I wish you would have my carriage for me in a quarter

of an hour," she said briefly. "Tell Hughes he may carry down this gown in a few minutes." Then she disappeared.

Ten minutes later she came down to where Thayer stood waiting for her. She had changed her gown for a street suit of brown cloth, and she was drawing on her gloves as she came up to him.

"You didn't think I was displeased, Kirk?" she asked with a simple directness that was a part of her complexity. "The likeness is—like a search-light." She shivered slightly. "It is only that no one ever before—it is uncanny!" She finished with a thrill of emotion in her voice that made Thayer stare at her curiously. Then he laughed.

"You strange, strange thing," he murmured. "Strange to all the world but me! I know you through and through, and if it is to be a contest of wills between us before you sit for me again, so be it!" He hurled a great red rose at her with startling directness, and stood off laughing at her. All of a sudden his anger and petulance against her had died down. But her mood had changed, too. She did not stoop to take up the

challenge. The softness in her eyes went away, and she only laughed with an indifference that was stirless.

"You grow melodramatic, Kirk," she said. "You need to brush up on what makes the difference between cheap and real effects. Now if you had handed me that lovely rose, I should have pinned it on my breast and worn it dreamingly home. But instead you bruise it—for what?"

He took her down to her carriage and put her into it with all the absorbed tenderness that characterized him when with a woman.

"If it is possible to rush it through we shall sail day after to-morrow," she called to him after the last good by. Thayer nodded happily.

Far out to sea, off the wild, rocky coast of Sutherlandshire, there lies a small storm-beaten island which to itself owns no sway of English kings. Britain's monarchs have come and gone for many centuries, but royal court mournings have meant less than nothing to this handful of peasants who live out their simple lives and die their stoical deaths regardless of events that plunge into mingled joy and sorrow the crowded London marts: "The king is dead, long live the king!"

Theoretically Rohan Island, Eilean Rohan according to native nomenclature, belongs to the British crown. Practically it lies to itself in the fog of the sea, with its gigantic moat of raging waters ever about it, and by its dreariness and inaccessibility escaping interference from crown or crown officer. Few Englishmen comparatively have ever heard of Eilean Rohan. Fewer still have ever set foot on its rocky shore;

for the channel crossing is always dangerous, and Skerra, the nearest point whence a boat can reach the island, is at the extreme north of Scotland, a drive of ten miles from Tongue.

There is enough in the preliminaries of travel to discourage the most ardent of tourists, and after all is said and done and the treacherous waters are safely crossed, what does the island offer? A few miles of rocky ground; a tribe of dark-skinned, dark-browed folk, resentful of intrusion, simple and primitive in thought and manner, and literally wresting from the air and the earth and the fleeing sea their daily sustenance. No cathedrals, no dwellings built for any purpose other than to afford shelter and to withstand the fury of the North Sea winds; nothing to entice, much to repel. Small wonder that the Rohan folk have lived without interference from and in ignorance of the world beyond the stretch of endless sea fog.

Eilean Rohan lies in a waste of water. On clear days,—and they come but seldom,—the bleak coast of northern Scotland may be seen to the south of it, but always through a haze of violet or ruddy gold. About it rushes with end-

less flow and murmuring sob the chameleon sea with its green and its blue and its purple and grays. Moment after moment, day after day, it dashes its smoky spray against the rock girth of the island, and there, baffled and bereft momentarily of the mighty impetus that pushed it thither, it sinks down as the smoke of a passing steamer dies away on the horizon.

But when storms come, and they are not too seldom, then from one end of the island to the other roars the sea. Like a mighty maddened god it crashes against the natural barricade of cliffs, and hisses and shrieks and bellows in fury. Then are nights of terror; terror for the women in the low cottages on the island, terror for the men abroad in the sturdy fishing smacks. Too often with the morning's light, swept in from the engulfing sea along with the tiny fish that strew the shores comes the pale, soaked body of many a Rohan man, primitive in life and in death the same.

But on a sunny day Eilean Rohan is pleasant to see, for then the sky is as blue as ever Italy can boast, and its sea can be as rippling in its calm as the waters that lave the shores of sunny

France. Then the color of sea and sky is something to make the eye of a Philistine and the heart of an artist ache. And as the day goes on and the sun at last drops into the welcoming ocean, the whole spread of isle and waters seems one wondrous jewel stirred softly in its setting of space by some mighty hand, so gloriously do the radiant tones melt and fuse above and within the shifting waters. Only a moment of climacteric beauty, then the intensity of color grows dull and lusterless, and the night comes out with a rush and the vision is gone. But the seeing eye that has looked upon it never forgets the sight, and for it the color never fades.

The Eilean folk are not artists. But they are not Philistines. Within them is that love for, that sympathy with Nature and her mysteries that is denied the child of cities and of courts. The beauty of their island home is not wasted on them, notwithstanding the fact that they have no singers to blare forth its praises, no painter to splash on a square foot of canvas their stretch of sea and color. Deep within their souls, too deep for the daylight glare of speech and protestation, lies their appreciation of Na-

ture, her tenderness, her mighty force. Their silent worship is seen only in the uprightness of their lives, in the valor of their sons, the honor of their daughters. And their daughters do not lack valor, nor their sons honor. Their code of morals is brief, hardly based on the Golden Rule of Christianity, for they are not a meek people; nor do they hold meekness in high repute. They would brand a man a coward and disown him as a son if he turned the other cheek. But without preaching they practise honor from man to man, from man to woman; honor from woman to man, and from woman to woman. This is their complete code, and who shall say that, if carried out in its entirety, it is not enough. In nations that for centuries have had the fostering care of priest and church and king and court and culture, how many have succeeded in raising humanity to the level where they give and demand the last two requirements of these island folk!

For centuries The Rohans have ruled Eilean Rohan. With the passing of the old chief's breath the oldest son has become the father of his father's people, the one whom the Rohanites

in unwitting treason call their king. It is the patriarchal rule of prehistoric times. In The Rohan's hands is life and death; to him disputes are brought and by him they are settled; to him the lovers of the island come for permission to wed, and in all ways he is the good father of his people.

Ordinarily The Rohan has come to his rule great with age, but with the last change of rulers the grandson, not the son of the ruling king, had taken the old king's place. He had come to his inheritance a mere youth, but for thirty years he had ruled wisely and well over the few hundreds that survived the hardships and dangers of their forefathers. He was a man fifty years of age.

Two sons he had, stalwart lads, either one of them worthy to take his place when it should know him no more, and one daughter. The mother had died at the girl's birth, and the three men had, almost unaided, brought up the tender little babe to a beautiful maidenhood. At her fifteenth birthday she had formally assumed control of her father's house, and for a year had been in charge of all the household manage-

ment. Old Marget, the woman who had come to the home with The Rohan's bride, was still there; but the daughter of the house was its mistress.

The Rohan's house stood a little to one side of the group of cottages in the main village that sheltered most of the island's inhabitants. It differed not at all from the prevailing style of architecture, save that it was perhaps a little larger, and its foundations somewhat more solid and imposing-looking by comparison. Its front faced to the south, and the entrance door opened directly upon a large hall that ran the length of the house. From its center a rude stairway rose to what was hardly more than a loft above. The architectural need for lowness of structure forbade a two-story dwelling, and in the bed-rooms above it was impossible for a full-grown man to stand erect anywhere other than in the center of the room, so sharply did the roof slope downward.

On each side were rooms, three in all. The main living room of the house was as large as the other two combined, being in fact half the lower part of the house. It served not only as

a living room, but for cooking and dining purposes as well. At its northern end a great fireplace yawned whose light on winter evenings did away with the need for candles. Its fuel came from the brine-soaked driftwood of the North Sea, and many a brave ship's mast sank into embers within The Rohan's fireplace.

In this room and in the hall there was no attempt at plastering. The walls and the ceilings were of sturdy oak, darkened by time and wear to a blackness as rare as it was lovely. The natural grain of the wood was its only adornment; there were no attempts anywhere at carving. A heavy round table near the center of the room was its most prominent furnishing, though rude-built chairs of scant comfort stood about the walls. On the other side of the hall was the room of state, which had no special times of opening and was therefore seldom entered, and back of it was The Rohan's bed-chamber. Above were the several rooms for the rest of the household.

It was on one of the beautiful afternoons of their short summer that Clodah Rohan stole off from the cottage where she had been spinning

all the day to a favorite cliff overlooking the Scottish shore. There for many months she had liked to sit and dream about the great unknown world over beyond the rolling sea. Even the Scotsmen of the mainland, the few she had seen, were mysterious people to her, and she had seen so few of them, and none but men. What their women were like she had no idea. In all her life of sixteen years she had never been off the island, and there was no immediate probability that any such innovation would come into her quiet life. But few of the island women had ever been so far as the mainland; travel for their womankind was not encouraged by the Rohan men.

Clodah therefore had but little on which to found her fancies of another world than her own, but girls are girls the dear world over, whether they live in castles or clay-caked huts; and despite the fact that the island girls were not supposed to dream much, Clodah had for many months been weaving to herself all sorts of pretty tales about a land of which she had no knowledge and a people for whose conduct she had no standards.

She was at that stage in her life that comes to every woman child when a mounting fever within makes her turn from the commonplace life about her to something that has in it the luring fascination of the unknown. With some girls there comes with the fever, a feverish thirst for knowledge that will not be slaked save by personal experience; with others there is only a gentle delirium of fanciful imaginings which passes over and leaves the innocence of girlhood unflecked. Clodah would not have told her fancies to any human being, although she might have shouted them to the world. Not that the world would have been interested in the flatness of them; the world does not care for pretty fancies with no enticing base of knowledge, either of self or others. So Clodah only followed a great natural instinct when she kept close to herself her dreamings and imaginings in which after all she figured but slightly.

To-day she was sitting on top of the red sandstone cliff that forms the natural southern barricade of the island. The afternoon was clear and sunny, the sky and the sea were a wonderful blue, and the scanty green of the island

showed vivid and joyous against the dull red of its rocks. She had been watching for an hour a great white-winged yacht in the distance that had seemed to sway softly with the flow of the sea. Suddenly it turned, and to her intense excitement she saw it driving swiftly toward the island. She watched it breathlessly while it picked its graceful way among the reefs and shallows, and finally came to port at some distance beyond the pier to her right.

A number of people were standing on deck, and Clodah bent eagerly forward to see more clearly these wonderful human beings of another world. As she did so a woman standing rather well forward in the group raised her eyes and caught the flicker of the girl's scarlet skirt and cap shining like a redbird's breast against the dull stone background. She beckoned to her, and at first Clodah hesitated; but when the gesture was repeated she slipped like a mountain deer from her perch, and by a detour that only her perfect familiarity with the path made safe for her, climbed down the steep stone wall and ran out upon the rude pier.

The primitive harbor was deserted that after-

noon, for a great mackerel shoal had been reported early in the morning, and the men, together with many of the women, were on the other side of the island. Only a few old crones and little babies were left in the village proper.

As Clodah touched the shore the yachting party, who had been watching her perilous descent with admiration and fear commingled, gave a united cheer whereat she was mightily puzzled. That it was for her and her light-footedness she never dreamed. The beautiful woman, with hair that shone like ruddy gold in the sunshine, was leaning over the polished railing of the vessel. Her yachting gown of white flannel and gold glistened and glittered in the sea reflection about her. She called to the girl with a wonderful something in her tone that Clodah, accustomed as she was to the plain speech of an uncultivated people, had never heard before in the human voice.

"Is there anything to see here, my child?"

"Naethin', ma'm," Clodah answered simply.

The woman turned to the group about her and said something to them laughing. Then

she called again. "May we land even if there is nothing to see?"

"Oh yes, ma'm!" the girl replied instantly, in confusion lest her first reply had shown inhospitality, a crime second to none in the eyes of her and her people.

There was a little hurry on the yacht, a rush to and fro, and then the lowering of a boat that, to Clodah's eyes, accustomed as they were to the great heavy fishing boats built to resist wind and wave, seemed too frail for a fairy's use. Within a few moments the whole party, numbering about ten, were landed. Several women were there, but Clodah had eyes only for the tall, goddess-like creature with a voice like bells and a face that transcended in loveliness the most daring flight of the little islander's imagination. She was talking and laughing gaily, and most of the men were vying with each other as to who should help her from the boat and carry the red sunshade that cast such a light over her white and gold gown. They called her Mrs. Davenport, and as Clodah led the way up to her father's house she listened in a fascinated

dream to the ripple of laughter and the ripple of words that came from the lips of this woman. All the others counted as nothing to Clodah beside the magnetic charms of this white-gowned creature.

Some one after all had conquered in the merry battle and had taken possession of the red sunshade. Clodah glanced at him shyly once or twice to see what manner of man it was this woman liked. He was tall and finely made. He wore a cap pulled down low over a wealth of brown hair, and he was dressed in a brown corduroy hunting suit, in calm ignoring of the fact that this was a yachting party. His eyes were dark and keen. Once as Clodah looked at him she felt him looking into her own eyes as if he were piercing through them to the thought beyond. She returned his gaze quite simply, quite like the child she was. His eyes were beautiful in themselves, but weary lines, deep-set lines surrounded them. Taken altogether, he was a perfect picture of a healthy, virile Englishman with the added nameless atmosphere about him of the artist, that is neither

English, nor yet French nor Spanish, but is part of a universal type.

"What did I tell you!" Clodah heard the lady say. "Haven't you enough color now to satisfy you? Isn't the clear coolness of this better than the coppery heat of Africa? Did you ever see anything quite like the intense azure of that sea? Wasn't it worth while?"

Thayer whistled. His eyes were still on the slender girl in front of them.

"One of your greatest charms to me has been that you know how to find out what you want to know without asking questions," he said. "That last set of remarks is calculated to smash every fond dream I've cherished concerning you. I don't mind baring my very soul to a woman if she lets me feel I am telling her of my own free will! But when she fires off her questions, I want to get to cover. Where's the rest of your show?"

"The king?" Mrs. Davenport queried. "The place really has one. What would your dear Edward say to that? I want to see him. Mr. Davenport likes him. He says that of all men

he ever met, civilized or savage, The Rohan takes the cake!" She put in her Americanism deliberately. Then she called the girl.

"Isn't there a king about here, my child?"

Clodah drew herself up with a resentment that during the last moment had grown to somewhat large proportions

"There be The Rohan," she said proudly.

"And would he give us an audience?" Mrs. Davenport asked gaily.

"The mackerel hae come," Clodah answered simply. "He be busy to-day."

The group broke into sudden merry laughter.

"The king! He goes a-fishing!" Only Hilda Davenport and her companion noted the trembling lips and heightened color of the girl, and with that delicate intuition of hers that was like a sensitive plant Mrs. Davenport drew nearer to Clodah.

"What is your name, my dear?"

"Clodah Rohan."

"The Rohan's daughter?"

"Yes," the girl answered with a pride that showed itself in the clear gaze of her eyes as she looked directly at her questioner.

"I wonder if he would let us see him for a little while," Mrs. Davenport said gravely. "Perhaps if you will tell him that I am the wife of the Mr. Davenport who stayed here several weeks three summers ago—" The shine in Clodah's eyes stopped her.

"Ah," the girl murmured without knowing she had dared to interrupt, "he was the man who saved my brother's life for us all. Ah, you mus' nae go till my feyther see you. He will be grieved if that carries you away." She flung out her hand toward the yacht. Then she spoke with added rapidity. "If you will all come up to yon'er house, I'll greet you there, an' I'll send for my feyther, an' if he be nae on the sea he'll come to greet you. He cares for Maïster Davenport."

There was more in the inflection of her simple "care" than in many a rhapsody. She stood for a moment looking at Mrs. Davenport with a growing thought crowding into her eyes. Fate was something dumbly accepted but never preached by her people. For the first time in her life she felt the force and meaning of the old Greek doctrine that she would not have

known by name. The coming of Maister Davenport had been an event that had meant much to her; the coming to-day of this flute-voiced woman, his wife, was a wonder, a fitting together of detail such as she had never known before.

Her absorption in the marvel of it made her blind to the fact that she was being generously stared at by the gay group of pleasure-seekers. A princess in any guise, be she the daughter of a king crowned or uncrowned, is interesting. Whatever may be her defects, physical or mental, she has at least about her the halo of an ancestry that can be traced.

But Clodah did not lack physically of admirable points. Since she had first appeared to them on that forlorn strip of shore like some changeling, some living embodiment of legend and folklore, Thayer had hardly removed his eyes from her. Her simple garb with all its picturesqueness had caught him; the blue blouse, the short red skirts, the scarlet cap crowning masses of hair that defied description. It was not red, it was neither gold nor brown, but something of each was there to give it a ruddiness and a shine and a depth that made his color sense

tingle. She wore it in simple plaits down her back, and as she sped before them in the eagerness of her hospitality he drank in its color thirstily. He noted the grace of her untrammeled walk, the sway of her back, the exquisite though still undeveloped curve of her hip. Her throat rose like a slender stem from her faded blue blouse, and she carried her head with an air that a daughter of the Vere de Veres could hardly have challenged without disaster.

In the intensity of his study of the girl Thayer forgot for a moment his place by Mrs. Davenport's side, and took some rapid strides to where he had for one delicious moment an unobstructed view of the girl's delicate profile. She was walking freely along, her hands clasped loosely in front of her, her head slightly lifted. A more perfect pose no professional beauty could have attained, and Thayer gave all honor to its added merit of nature and accident. Her eyes that seemed to have caught a depth of color from the sapphire sea were drooped, not enough to hide them, but enough to show the milkiness of the eyelids and the dark curve of her lashes. Her nose was small and slightly upturned. with

two peculiar tiny dents just above the nostrils. Her lips were full and sweet and her chin was firm and decided. Thayer's artistic rapture mounted higher.

"If only she has the power of expression, the power to show what she feels, for she can feel with the intensity of—" He felt a light hand fall on his arm.

"She is a king's daughter, my friend," Mrs. Davenport whispered with a delicate irony. "Remember, I come here, a dependent on the island's hospitality, not to bring discontent—and worse."

Thayer threw back his shoulders with an annoyance he tried not to show, but that Mrs. Davenport felt.

"Your muggy London can not furnish a model half so fair, is that what you are thinking?" she asked. "Well, I agree with you. But she shall not be tempted, not even with a crayon sketch this afternoon. Why did I bring you with me here? You are like a breath of Roman fever, Kirk. You blight and wither, and why? Not for pleasure; you are never happy. For art? A picture that costs a soul

is a dreadful thing. Sometimes I think you could do what those fearful artists of the Middle Ages did—crucify a man and paint him while he was dying, so that all the death strain of the muscles might be absolutely flawless. I think sometimes that you might do what I never heard they did—give the wooden frame a little jar to rouse him from a temporary lull. Ugh!—sometimes—" She stopped short. Her lips were quivering. Thayer was studying her strange emotion. An amused little smile hovered about his mouth.

"My dear Hilda," he said lightly, "it is at such moments as this that I am more than ever convinced that you are the one woman in the world who should give herself to me for the great work of my life. Sometimes when I see you in the world I grow fearful of my reading of you. No mortal there can see in the society woman that you are to others the woman that I see and admire—and reverence. I have shown you your soul in your portrait, you yourself confess, as no one else has read it. You understand me and my gifts, and you do not condemn me for much that is ruthlessly condemned in me

by others. But after all I am easy to read. I do more in comprehending you than you do in reading me. I interpret you, your gifts, your swift comprehension of art and its ideals, your standards of life and art. You have done me the honor to praise my work, the tangible evidences of my talents. You have done me the infinitely greater honor of praising what is bare and poor, my description of my dominant idea for a painting that shall put all my past work in the shade. A woman who can understand without seeing and without question is one in ten thousand, notwithstanding all her sex's vaunted intuition. You have caught at my poor words and have seen the beauty I have been unable to put into them. And then, when I tell you you are the one woman I have ever met who realizes my ideal of the woman I need for my model on that work, your single modicum of convention, hollow and reasonless, asserts itself, and you say no!"

Mrs. Davenport's lips moved, but Thayer stopped her by a gesture. They were standing alone in a turn of the path. The rest of the

party had gone on up the steep path toward the house.

"Just a moment," he said. "For this one moment in all our lives, with all this delirious color about us, forget that there is anything in the world but art and beauty. If I could not forget that for a space now and then I should go mad. Then tell me why, when I want you, need you, for my Christian maiden, you will not consent to grant my prayer. Suppose it is in the altogether. You will be talked about! Pah! the cackle of the virtuous matron is appraised at its true value in these days. I tell you I shall disguise your face—somewhat—perhaps." He laughed a little. "Never say I am not honest with you even *in extremis!* If I caught the expression I wanted, like to you or unlike, I should undoubtedly let it remain. My dear Hilda, I could, if you would have permitted it or have made it worth my while, felt an overmastering passion for you. But I understand you through all your indifference to convention and modern standards of morals, and I know that in spite of the fact that you have been

married some half-dozen years, you still cling to Darby! In spite of what you said a fortnight ago, I am not so great a child as to cry out continually for the cold, lovely, maddening moon! So it is not the inspiration of passion that urges me to choose you. And it is undoubtedly true that should I be let love you, and you love me, and you should let that sanctify to your queer conscience the question of posing for me, I should forget my love and you and all things else in the fever of my desire to rush on to my canvas the perfect realization in you of my ideal. I am brutal! Yes, where art is concerned."

Mrs. Davenport listened in serene silence.

"I long to see that picture," she said calmly. "I know you have it in you to give a wearied world something that will stir it out of its little clevernesses and affectations into an approach to primitive emotions; and I long to help you. You are a wonderful man, Kirk, and I worship your genius. From the time we first met there has been an uncanny sort of sixth sense affinity between us, hasn't there? But my friend, I am afraid you will never gain your

heart's desire through me. I fall short and fail you there. I know all your arguments by heart. I know the miserable horrors that modern convention hides, and your contempt for social laws that are observed for themselves and not for their spirit is no deeper than mine. But—" she raised her lovely eyes and looked straight into his, "though I fear neither you nor myself, there is something within that tells me I should only make a miserable fiasco if I yielded to your desire. We are neither of us children. We know our age and its many faults. I thought I was a materialist till I met you. Since then I have doubted. I had held that in spite of church and priest we are only poor human beings, created not a little lower than the angels, but a little higher than the brutes. You drag poor, shivering mortality down to the brutes' level. And I insist by the very strength of my repugnance to your desire that I am something more than a female animal. I would grant you this if I could, for your gifts are great, but my —call it what you will—is greater, and you must go elsewhere. Call this final, Kirk." She turned back to the winding path.

"Come," she cried gaily, "we want to see the king and something more of the princess." She furled her red sunshade lightly, and led the way quickly up the rough road.

Within The Rohan's house was subdued excitement. Mrs. French and her daughter Helen had taken on themselves the self-imposed part of hostesses, and were doing the honors freely to the rest of the party. Clodah had led them into the oak-beamed hall and had left them there while she went out to the kitchen to revive the covered embers in the fireplace and to swing the porridge kettle above the growing flame. Something must be offered to her guests, and in the intensity of her happy hospitality never a thought of the scantiness of her resources entered her head. Her cheeks flamed high with excitement and pleasure, and she stopped from time to time in her quick hurrying to and fro to catch some lovely laugh, some pretty inflection the like of which she had never heard. Such exquisite women she had not dreamed existed; who rustled when they moved; who shed sweet perfume all about them; whose

voices were like the chimes of bells that float over the North Sea on clear Sunday mornings; like the dreamy echoes of Gling-gling cave far across the waves at Strathay Point.

She threw open the doors of the great oak cupboard. What should be spread for her guests? Porridge and cream, and toast thin and crisp and golden brown. And tea; some of the precious store in the blue-figured jar should come out for this feast! She set her porridge cooking, and went blithely about slicing bread and measuring out the treasured tea carefully into the brown stone pot. When matters were fairly started she gave the bubbling porridge one last careful stir, and then ran out to the cool cave under the hillside where The Rohans had kept their butter and milk from the time of the first one down. It was on her return from that errand that Mrs. Davenport and Thayer met her. In the excitement attendant on preparing for so large a company she had rolled up the sleeves of her blouse to her shoulders, and in her bare, slender arms she was carrying a heavy stone jar of yellow cream.

Thayer stepped forward to take her burden, but she swerved away.

"You be my feyther's guest," she said simply. "It's nae fittin'."

Thayer replaced his cap in its old careless place on his head.

"Some other things are far less fitting," he laughed, and, bending down, he took the jar with deliberate slowness from the girl's embrace. "In my country," he went on carelessly as he walked beside her, "it does not matter that a man is guest or master. All that matters is that a woman is a woman."

Clodah looked at him without a trace of the confusion that he had expected to see.

"Then in your country isna the man the maister?" she asked.

Mrs. Davenport answered the question, and Thayer noted with a pique that fired him to other things the sensitive flush that spread over the girl's face at the sound of the lovely voice.

"My dear, the man is the master wherever he is, but in 'our country,' "—she mocked Thayer's intonation—"he covers it up just as your mother gives you bitter pills in nice red jelly."

Clodah looked uncomprehendingly from one to the other. Suddenly she realized how she had been dallying. She had left the fire hot, with the porridge boiling on it. She looked at her two companions in utter loss.

"Would—" she began and then faltered. To her it seemed an awful thing to leave a guest to bear alone what should have been her burden. Mrs. Davenport came to her rescue.

"Tell me, child. Ah, yes, the porridge! You should not have gone to all that trouble for us, but certainly go." As the girl fled Hilda glanced sharply at Thayer, opened her lips as if to speak, and then closed them resolutely. But Thayer's thought could not bear repression.

"I say, Hilda," he cried excitedly, "have you noticed that girl, how like she is to—you?" The comparison found expression as it dawned on him. Mrs. Davenport took the shock very calmly.

"Because we both have tawny hair," she said, "you must draw the comparison? Ah, Kirk, sometimes I think it is an awful thing to have the curse of temperament." Then they reached the house, and while Thayer stopped to deposit his

burden Mrs. Davenport joined the group in the hall, all in the high tide of enthusiasm over the strangeness of the little island, and full of pity for the life.

"What a waste of loveliness!" Mrs. French sighed once as Clodah's little figure glanced for a moment by the open door of the living room.

"I wonder if we shall see The Rohan after all," murmured her daughter. "Are you sure, Mrs. Davenport, that he is really in existence?"

Mrs. Davenport had gone out on the little green that surrounded the house. She was standing looking toward the west, with her hand shading her eyes from the sun.

"So sure that I venture to say he is coming yonder. See, that must be he in the lead. I know he is very tall." She pointed to a group of men and women who were coming over the winding path that leads to the north of the island. Three figures led the group, one of them slightly in advance of the other two. They were hurrying and in their haste were outstripping the rest of the party.

"I feel nervous," Helen French sighed, "almost as if I were where I had no business to be."

Mrs. Davenport smiled. "There are others!" she murmured quite to herself with a silent delight in the broad American slang in which she indulged with discriminating intelligence. She glanced toward the kitchen, whence was coming the tantalizing odor of toasting bread. Within its sheltering doors Thayer had sometime since disappeared with his cool, sweet burden.

"The girl is like me," she reflected with a curious unrest, "a replica on a smaller scale. We are strangely near in coloring—ah well, we leave in an hour. What a dear little sight she made as she came scrambling down the cliff! I was right; it is The Rohan."

She moved toward the three men who were approaching swiftly and silently, and who met her in the same demanding silence. By common consent she was left to face them alone.

The oldest of the men stopped a little in advance of the others and looked at her questioningly. He was a tall man, bronzed with the tan of salt sea spray and sweeping wind. His face was heavily bearded, and at his temples iron gray streaks showed the fullness of his fifty

years. His gaze was clear and untroubled by any trace of embarrassment, as he waited quietly for an explanation of the unexpected influx of guests.

"You are The Rohan?" Mrs. Davenport asked with the grace not one whit abated that she would have shown at any European court. "Perhaps you have not forgotten my husband, Mr. Davenport—" She stopped; the faces of all three men had suddenly lighted up.

The Rohan answered her with a strong Celtic brogue, but in good English. "He was a brave man," he said briefly. "He is here wi' ye?"

Mrs. Davenport smiled to herself as she felt the tension of the group behind her. No one understood better than she the scarcely veiled curiosity of Londoners concerning her married life, and no woman was more capable of baffling all curiosity she did not desire to satisfy.

"No," she said serenely, "he is not in England now. But he has told me of you, of your hospitality to him, of his indebtedness to you, and when we sighted this place—I have my yacht down there," she added carelessly—"I wanted

to stop for a few hours to bear to you his highest regards, even though he is in ignorance of my being here."

The Rohan listened gravely; then he drew forward the two young men standing silent by him.

"This is my son George, my eldest son," he said proudly; "the one who owes his life to yir husband, he who will inherit. This is Donald Ross, his friend. Ye hae seen my daughter? Ye an' yirs are welcome guests. Davenport was a brave man."

Just then Clodah appeared in the doorway. Behind her Thayer loomed in all his magnificent height. The sound of her voice calling them to the simple feast she had prepared for them brought all eyes upon her and her companion. The Rohan stopped and surveyed the artist in silence. Then he turned to Mrs. Davenport.

"Anither o' yir friends?" he inquired with a subtile something in his tone that made her smile irrepressibly as she glanced at Thayer. She knew that The Rohan had looked and judged, and that as far as island standards went his judgment was not incorrect.

At her assenting nod The Rohan went forward and greeted Thayer as simply as he had done all the rest of the yachting party. But Mrs. Davenport noted what added a touch of keener human interest to the Arcadian scene before her, that Donald Ross had also looked and judged. His eyes flashed and his strong hands twitched nervously as he glanced quickly from Clodah to Thayer and back again to the girl's flushed face. Mrs. Davenport followed his swift glance, and her gaze lingered on Clodah. The girl looked up suddenly, and as she caught Hilda's eye her color flamed higher. As they were entering the house Mrs. Davenport caught her about the waist.

"Are you afraid of me, Clodah?" she asked softly. The girl shook her head and her eyes filled with tears that she could not force back.

"I never knew a lady could be so lovely," she faltered, "an' in there"—she stopped with lips that were quivering too much for speech.

"Go on," Mrs. Davenport urged quietly.

"He said—he told me in yon'er—that—he said I was like to you!" There was a great amazement in the child's voice, an amazement

untempered by any consciousness of the man who had told her what she had just repeated. Mrs. Davenport thought with a swift amusement, and inward glee at Thayer, that the emotional results would have been undoubtedly the same if Helen French had imparted the wonderful news.

"Well, you know," she began in a matter-of-fact tone that had nothing in it calculated to bring forth any other tears and yet was full of a comprehending sympathy, "we aren't unlike at all. We both have—what do you call your hair—red? And our eyes are on the same style, only yours are really more beautiful." She stopped and laughed, for the girl had drawn a deep breath at the last words. Mrs. Davenport slipped her arm about her with a tender touch.

"Dear child," she said softly, "are you just learning that you are wonderfully beautiful? And then the harder lesson is behind, the learning that beauty brings more pain than pleasure oftentimes. Believe me when I say it does not count."

As she finished she knew from the girl's eyes

that all the last part of her little speech had fallen on closed ears, for Clodah was looking with almost painful fascination into the face that Hilda herself knew was a most beautiful one. She sighed a little and, moved by an impulse that did not often come to her, she bent and kissed Clodah softly. Then she went into the room where all the guests were awaiting their tardy hostesses, and joined them as they gathered about the white-spread table.

The linen was that of Clodah's grandmother's spinning. The scanty silverware was centuries old. Clodah poured the tea, and filled the porridge bowls seemingly with no consciousness that any other place could furnish a luncheon more to be desired. The Rohan unbent from his taciturnity sufficiently to tell his assembled guests of that prolonged fishing trip three summers before when they had taken on the American gentleman at Tongue because of his earnest solicitations and not because they cared to introduce a foreign element into their fishing body; of how his sturdiness and endurance won their good graces; of how at last in the great storm that broke while they were out at sea

Maister Davenport not only bore himself like an islander and a seaman born, but when The Rohan's elder son was seized by a mighty wave and swept overboard, it was the American before the islanders who sprang into the lashing gulf of distended waves; and how through some miracle of strength and fortune both came back alive, rescuer and rescued. "He is a man," The Rohan finished.

The sun was sinking low in the west before they rose from the table. Soon after the tea was poured Mrs. Davenport pulled Clodah down beside her, and within a few moments Thayer drew his chair over to them. It was only by slow degrees that he succeeded in gaining and holding Clodah's attention, but at last he was successful, and for a half-hour talked to her of painting and of pictures in a simple way that after all put him on his mettle; for he knew that the terminology of worldly art culture would not meet the needs of this simple child, and to express what he wanted to say in terms other than those of his world was an effort that spurred him to success. Clodah listened spellbound to all he told her

of what painters could do with their brushes and colors, and suddenly, when Mrs. French hinted at the growing lateness of the hour and the advisability of their starting for their boat, Clodah sprang eagerly from her chair and ran to the door. When she turned back to them her eyes were shining. She addressed Thayer directly.

"Oh," she cried, "if you can wait a little longer, if you needna start just now, I can show you what looks like all your lovely tales sound. I canna tell it you, I dinna know the words, but come and see."

She held out her hand to him, and then with a sweet grace she extended the other to Mrs. Davenport. Her father smiled gravely.

"The lass be daft o'er a sunset," he said. "If ye dinna care to see it tell her so."

Clodah waited impatiently. "They want to see it, feyther," she said. "They care for lovely things, an' the sun is setting yellow."

By one consent they all followed her out of the cottage and she hurried them impatiently down the road they had come over that afternoon.

"I canna always tell," she said breathlessly,

"for the lovely sight comes but seldom, but I think to-night it'll be flyin' o'er the sea to welcome you. An' the best place to see it is where you caught sight o' me this day, atop o' the Red Rock."

They had begun to climb upward now. Thayer and Mrs. Davenport followed her lead with a growing expectation. When they finally reached the top of the cliff that from Scotland's shore seems to rise precipitously out of the sea they were far ahead of the rest of the party. Thayer stared at Clodah in a wordless fascination as she stood there in the buttercup glow, her tendrils of hair swayed by the gentle wind, her little hands folded, and her deep blue eyes spangled with a shining expectancy.

"It's comin'!" she breathed reverently. "The sight that hasna been this whole summer. Look!" She raised her arm and pointed toward the golden globe hanging just above the water's edge, the edge that seemed to sway and throb in longing to embrace it. The light had already begun to change. About the western horizon close to the sea the sky was purest gold. Above where it blended its yellow with the vivid

blue of the sky a blending strip of clearest apple green hung, and above that through a mass of powdered gold the blue emerged again triumphant. But over it all as the sun sank lower a rose hue began to creep, making of the heavens an indescribable wonder. Lavender tones stole here and there. Clear violet streaked the gold. Orange stripes banded the horizon. Pure carmine deepened from the rose. All the rainbow colors were there, and more modifications of them than a painter's palette holds. And the sea below received it all and gave it back, gold and green and blue and violet, and over all the rosy flush of the fading day. Then a purple pall began to spread slowly over the sky, blotting in its creeping path all the tender color of the opaline west.

An utter silence held the entire group. At last Thayer drew a long breath.

"How can we repay you!" he exclaimed with an underlying thrill in his voice that was sincere. "You have shown us a hospitality that we had no right to expect and I fear did not deserve. And in addition you have let us see a glory that is not of earth." He bent and kissed her hand gently. There was a little stir in the

rear of the group. Clodah felt a heavy hand on her shoulder, and looked up to see her father between her and Thayer.

"We hae done nothin', sir;" his deep voice made answer for his daughter. "Hospitality is the law o' our land, an' the maid didna create it for yir benefit. Neither did she make the sun set to order. We be simple folk, an' the lass dinna know court customs."

Mrs. Davenport came quickly to the rescue. "Then if you do not understand our customs you must pardon us the readier for not being aware of yours," she said with a ready wit that pierced the armor of The Rohan's pride. He smiled gravely at her.

"When ye next come," he said, "ye must bring yir husband with ye. He'll find a welcome that'll please him, for in spirit he is one o' us. He saved my son. He is a man, a man."

Through the swift falling twilight they descended the cliff to the harbor where the yacht stood waiting. As they went down, Clodah beside her father, the girl felt for the first time in all her innocent life a dull pain that she could

not understand gnawing at her heart. What it was that hurt her she did not know. But her first step along the painful path of knowledge had been taken that afternoon. For the first time she had heard of another life, another world than her own; for the first time she had seen the people of that world.

The hearing and the seeing had brought strange questionings to her mind, new emotions, new desires. Her day of perfect innocence was over, of unconscious life for the joy of living. Up to now she had walked among mysteries and had not known that they were hidden things. In all their darknesses she had played with them as if they were shining sunlight. Now their heavy shadows began to darken about her, and their blackness grew more impenetrable with every shoreward step she took. For her the joy of life had gone, and she could not tell why nor where. Life suddenly became an awful thing. The roar of the sea irritated her; the sea, that had been her closest friend from the time she had rolled, a tiny half-naked child, upon its hard soaked sands! The glory of her

childhood had gone out under the shadow of the evening purple, and she watched the white wraith of the yacht steal away as if it were the ghost of her slain peace.

That summer day marked the beginning of a new life for Clodah Rohan. It was a life filled with new emotions, new desires, strange longings; a life into which her old one did not enter save as a mournful memory of a past happiness. Yet the natural sweetness of her temperament was not affected by the sudden change, and with the blindness of men her father and brothers saw nothing of her hidden inner life. No one noted it; no one saw beyond the fact that she was fonder than ever of solitary wanderings; no one perceived the subtile change,—no one save Donald Ross. There is a certain love which poets have united in calling blind, but the love of Donald Ross for Clodah was not of that type. Toward him only, perhaps, there was in her a perceptible change of attitude which he alone was quick to note. Within the space of an hour she seemed to shoot up from careless childhood into an unexplainable woman. And what

brought woe to Donald's heart was the fact that to all others the spirit change as he saw it was hidden.

Donald Ross was of the soil. The secret things of a woman's soul he could not understand, but with a refinement of feeling that is too often lacking among his brothers of greater polish, he did not run the risk of tarnishing their delicacy by rough, untender handling. He could only stare at the acts inspired by emotions he could not comprehend, and suffer dumbly within himself.

"The little lass is a' right," The Rohan said to him one evening when Donald had ventured to say a word regarding Clodah's new silences and lonely wanderings. "Ne'er mind her, lad. She's growin' up, and she has to bide by hersel'. She's nae mither to go to, poor bairn. The women they hae to be let alone a year or so to learn theirsel's. Wait, lad." And Donald, comforted in his heavy man fashion by the silent sympathy whose spoken word would have been an insult to him, curbed himself into patient waiting.

As to Clodah, though her happy, unquestion-

ing childhood was gone, and she was struggling unaided in an endless labyrinth of strange longings and desires, she was not by any means unhappy. The Red Rock was her refuge, and on its solitary height, with all the vividness of her rich imaginings, she could live over every word, every tone of every voice that had fallen on her ears that wonderful day. Of Hilda Davenport she thought with a quaint reverence, and a longing that had a hopeless yearning about it. It was her first passion for a woman, her first passionate love for any human thing, and it had struck deep.

Of Thayer she thought, too, but with more shyness, a little distaste, and without deliberation. She would perch in her sea-blown nook and would shut her eyes and fold her hands together with the deliberate intention of calling Mrs. Davenport before her mental eye. Thayer drifted into the picture now and then without conscious volition on her part. She shrank from the feeling that the memory of his words, his glances stirred within her; her cheeks always flamed high when she seemed to feel again the touch of his lips on her hand. But though she

had changed to her silent island lover, and within herself, she was still to herself a mystery that she had not yet the skill to probe, even had she had the conscious desire to know herself. In most ways she was the same simple child she had always been, with a few added dreams that had not to do as her former ones had done, with birds and dancing waves and flowers. She was awakening, but not awake.

It was midsummer of the next year. London was almost deserted. The season was well over and the tide of summer travel had already set in. The season had been remarkable for two things, first its unutterable dullness, and then the exhibit in a commonplace display at the Academy that spring of Kirk Thayer's painting, which on its first day had gained recognition as a masterpiece of portraiture. His portrait of Mrs. Davenport, finished for months, had not been shown until then. From every quarter ardent praises sprang to greet him. With the exhibiting of that painting Thayer's stock soared to dizzy heights. He had not been unrecognized before; now he was more than famous; he was idolized.

Mrs. Davenport had gone through her second London season with even more success than had attended her first one. From her first appearance she had been a marked woman, at first be-

cause of her peculiar but undeniable beauty. Later her friendship for Thayer made her the subject of many a whisper. When she began to pose for him, when she went to his studio time and again without observing any of the forms which convention, and above all London convention, demands of its votaries, the hum of talk rose and buzzed vigorously.

Women began to ask imperiously who she was, where was her husband? It was known that she was not a widow, and her presentation at court satisfied society that she was not a divorced woman. Her affairs from the first were gossiped to shreds, and the exasperating fact to her enemies,—and she had her full share of detractors,—was that no amount of mystery, real or created, had the slightest effect upon her social position. From the first it had been incontestible. When she had come over to England almost two years before it had been under the most flattering auspices. Her introductions, her social sponsors, her friends, were incontrovertible. So in spite of slur and innuendo she had gone her indifferent way before the world, and from it had reaped what she had

desired from its close hedged fields. She was a New Yorker, but she had not been back for almost two years. Just now she was on the point of departure for Russia, where she was to be the guest of the American ambassador.

The afternoon before she left London Mrs. Davenport and Thayer wandered into the Academy and sat down alone before the portrait that each of them knew to the last stroke. Yet Hilda leaned forward in a curious fascination and studied it anew.

"Do you know," she said at last, "I sometimes wonder how after all I could have let you hang me there. I could not have consented if I hadn't known how mole-eyed people are."

Thayer was in a moody frame of mind. For a week he had felt the fire of work in him and his material would not come to hand.

"I have succeeded in reading you?" he asked absently.

"To the last breath of a thought," she whispered. "No one on earth knows me that way. It is the naked ego."

"Look here, Hilda," Thayer broke out suddenly. "For God's sake, stay here in London

with me. I've everything drawn in, everything plotted out except that one figure. I've got to have you. Sometimes I think I shall go mad if I can't get started to work. For two weeks I've had models, a string of them. I've posed them—God, what horrors nature can produce! Each girl I've told to go. I've paid them for an hour when it took me only half a minute to decide. Something's wrong with every one, hair or eyes or arms or body. Not only that, no one of them has a breath of inspiration about her."

Mrs. Davenport continued to gaze at her portrait. "We have gone all over this before," she said, rather wearily.

He struck the floor with his stick. "Look there! See what I have done with you! I know every shine of your eyes, every turn of your mouth, every curve of you. I'm savage. If I don't get to work soon, and fearfully soon, all the inspiration that I've fed on you for a year past will be going."

Mrs. Davenport turned to him as to a fretful child. "Kirk, you ask an impossibility. You have painted the naked ego there, but the naked

body—no, I thank you. Don't favor me with any more of your leveling speeches; they don't carry conviction with them. It is impossible that I should give you what you desire, but it is equally impossible that there should not be in all of London or Paris a model, or two, or three, who can give professionally what you demand of my friendship. Frankly, you demand too much."

Thayer laughed harshly, rudely. "I wouldn't ask your friendship to hand over if I didn't know the body would fill all the laws of proportion. There's not a model to be had. I've gone through every studio and artist's quarters, and not a face inspires me. My inspiration is dwindling. Are you going to dare let that idea perish all because you won't drop your clothes and let me put your body up against a pillar and paint it, paint it!" There was despair in his voice.

"It's just exactly what I won't do," Mrs. Davenport said, soothingly. "My dear Kirk, I am an honest woman. In all ways I sympathize with your artistic passions, and for your genius I have an abiding reverence. But if I should

thrust aside some of the few feelings I still cling to and do what you ask, though I have no doubt I should come out of the ordeal an honest woman still, will you kindly count on your long, lovely fingers the names of those great ones whose homes would still be open to me? They need not know? O, yes they need. There are other things besides love and a cough which can not be hidden from modern priers. Then, I have never forgotten something you said to me nearly a year ago, that day we stopped at that queer little island—do you remember?—that you might change the face somewhat—perhaps. Suppose no one need know of the sittings, which is an impossible hypothesis, do you still quite dare to claim that I should not be betrayed?"

Thayer was staring fixedly at the portrait. The last words he had barely heard. She leaned back and watched him with a look half impatience, half amusement. She cared for this young artist very sincerely. As a study in types he interested her intensely. Of moral sense in the orthodox acceptation of the word he had none. His selfishness was absolute, supreme.

That he had his own peculiar code of honor was undoubted, but it was peculiar, and it was his own, and therefore it was subject to swift change. In his private life he was a type of the decadent in emotions and sensation that has flourished like a rank and hybrid growth the last quarter of a century. Yet of all men whom she knew, Mrs. Davenport admired him intellectually the most. Despite the decadence of his life his work showed virile and strong, and to it he was all devotion and untiring.

She possessed the power that is beyond most women of being able to dissociate her personal feelings from all things moral and mental. She had found Thayer interesting intellectually, worthy of study as a type, to be adored as a genius. For the rest she accepted him as he was, and let the tongues of the merry world about her wag as they would.

There is no doubt but that had she ever so faintly encouraged it, Thayer's unstinted admiration of her would have been fanned into a pretty blaze at which gossips would have gaily warmed their stale feasts of reason; but she was by no means a sensual woman, though her na-

ture was luxuriant in its passions and tropical in its sensuousness. Grossness in any form was beneath her. What she did not have to notice she preferred to let pass, a method of procedure for which she was often censured; but she had a philosophical disregard of the world and its sayings, and in the end suffered not nearly so much as the woman who neglects to assimilate the scientific fact that, turn as she will and smile as she may in her endeavors to show a smiling face to all the world, her back is turned upon half the world all the time. Mrs. Davenport turned when she pleased and smiled when she cared to, and by and by she succeeded in educating her world, without trying to educate it, into the settled conviction that comment touched her not at all, and rebuke amused her greatly. Thereby was her life made brighter.

For several moments Thayer sat in the same rigid silence. At last he turned to her swiftly, his eyes glowing like coals.

"I don't suppose you can realize, even with your infinite sympathy," he said slowly, "the fearful hold that picture has taken on my mind. It is eating into me. It thrills me like desire.

I must get to work, and I can't do a stroke on it now in my state of mind till I get my model. I have longed so intensely for you, have so hoped that my common sense would in the end prevail over your prudery, that I confess I have overlooked one other who—might—serve. I had forgotten her entirely. She might serve—even better." He said the last words slowly, deliberately.

Mrs. Davenport laughed. She was a woman absolutely devoid of personal vanity and Thayer knew it.

"Don't try to hurt my feelings," she said. "They aren't near the surface."

Thayer rose briskly. "O, I'm not trying to hurt your feelings," he replied. "I'm only studying ways and means. It's going to be hard to get her, but the more I think of it the more I——"

"What is she, so guarded or exalted; a prisoner or a princess?"

"That's it exactly. What a clever woman you are, Hilda!"

Mrs. Davenport started; then she gave a horrified little cry and turned positively white.

At last she laughed faintly, even though Thayer nodded at her decisively.

"Such utter nonsense!" she said at length, with a palpable attempt at lightness.

Thayer stood before her and smiled down into her eyes; a smile that was not pleasant to look upon. He spoke categorically.

"She has the eyes, she has the figure, she has your coloring to a shade, she has—that is, she had the absolute innocence——"

Hilda rose hastily. Despite her desire to treat the matter lightly and her horror of taking any trivial thing seriously she felt certain words rush irresistibly to her lips.

"Kirk, you are mad to consider such a thing for a moment. In the first place she wouldn't leave the island; they don't let their girls leave there too easily. In the next place—you might as well make it the first one—you would be shot down like a dog. Do you forget her father, her brothers, her lover? Do you hear me?" She gave him a little shake.

Thayer laughed. He had suddenly recovered his gaiety. "Yes, I hear you," he said lightly.

"Come, haven't we mooned here long enough? So you really leave to-morrow for Russia?"

"I have a great impulse to make it Scotland," she returned soberly. "Kirk, I feel it within me that you are about to do something reckless, abominable. Don't look so bored. This is the first time in all these months I have committed the great blunder of lecturing you. It shan't be repeated. For the first time since I have known you I feel puzzled about you. My common sense tells me you can't by the wildest stretch of folly be in earnest. Something else makes me foolish enough to take you seriously. In any event the girl is safe. But—" she paused impressively, "if by some diabolical chance I can not now foresee you succeed in harming that poor child, or even bring one care over her happy life, you shall have cause to remember that Hilda Davenport lives." She broke into a laugh, though her eyes looked anxious. "It sounds like a Drury Lane melodrama, doesn't it? Well, my dear boy, let me be the only one to contribute any lines or incidents."

He saw her off the next day, provided her

with fruit and flowers, and bade her farewell with genuine regret. Yet she was filled with a nameless dread at the godless light that danced in his beautiful eyes, and a prophetic fear of coming trouble haunted her throughout her journey. In Paris she laughed at herself constantly to drive away a mad, foolish impulse to give up her trip as she had planned it. In the end reason prevailed over intuition, and in a few days' time she was entering Russia.

It was another opal day on Eilean Rohan. All the afternoon Clodah had been perched on the Red Rock, looking with unseeing eyes out over the rolling sea. It was one of those rare days when the fog lifted and showed the shores of Scotland in the violet distance, and for hours she had sat there waiting for the sunset the lovely day had silently promised her. The eyes that stared so widely were sad ones; the mouth had a weary droop. Troubles were gathering black along her tiny horizon. First and last and all the time, Donald Ross. She was beginning to feel the difference between his love for her and her father's love. It was only an intuition. As yet Clodah had no knowledge of love nor of its demands. But she was disturbed by what she did not understand. She shrank from him, and she mourned much thereat, for she did not think it right to be other than at peace with all the world. When he came to the cottage

in the evenings as he had done from the time they were all children together she had often of late crept away, and in so doing had felt that she was displeasing her father and her brothers, and hurting Donald.

The Rohan never tried to control her, for never in all her gentle life had Clodah needed control, but her sensitive heart felt the disturbing elements in the atmosphere about her, and she blamed herself needlessly as the cause. To-day was her birthday. She was seventeen, and that morning her father had said something about their having sometime to give up their little house-mother to let her go into another home of her own. Clodah had flushed and had not answered, but the words had not left her, and with them the thought of Donald was inextricably mingled.

Finally she thrust all the heavy thoughts to one side; they had become too great a burden for her to bear any longer. She deliberately pushed actualities away, and took delightful and immediate refuge in her favorite dreams. Somehow, the beautiful lady of the summer before

was vivid in her thoughts. She seemed to hear the lovely voice again; to feel once more that tender arm about her. How lovely she was, how lovely! Clodah closed her eyes in an aching ecstasy of memory, and sat for a long time without stirring in a picturesque huddle against the cold, stern cliff. That man, The Thayer, he had said she was like the beautiful lady; her hair, her eyes, her mouth, her perfect grace! He had told her so many strange things that afternoon, about how he went to work to paint lovely things, about his colors, and he had called that sunset opal. Clodah since then had never called it anything else. And he had told her the island was so delightful and its people were so hospitable that he was coming back some day soon to paint their rocks and sea. That was already long ago, and he had not come. She drew her breath with a sharp little sound. She was tired of just wondering.

She opened her eyes with a tragic suddenness, and with a rudimentary despair in them she stared out on the sea. What did it all mean, this unrest? Once she had been so happy. On the

blue of the sea a tossing black line lay, something that she followed vacantly for many a minute before curiosity concerning it woke within her.

She leaned forward. It was not the day for the packet boat from Skerra, and none of the men were fishing to-day on the south side of the island. Was it really a boat, or only a great, helpless piece of driftwood lying at the mercy of the waves? With a passive curiosity she watched it drive nearer. It was a boat, so much was sure. Nearer and nearer it came across the miles of water. The wind was blowing toward the island and the tiny craft came dancing over the waves. When it was close enough for her to distinguish its occupants she leaned forward with great eagerness and then sank back filled with a disappointment whose vagueness did not make it any the less bitter. Only the plaid of the ordinary Scotsman met her gaze. She paid no more attention to it then, and let it pass beneath her and enter the small harbor.

The sun was sinking low. Already its ruddy edge rested upon the brink of the ocean. The sky was aflame with lavish orange hues. In the midst of the flare of color the disk of the sun

hung, blood red. Its stain passed upward as it sank down, and flooded the heavens with an unearthly color that mingled with the orange and yellows and struggled for the mastery. The girl sat there in a light strong and brilliant enough to make her seem the focus for the lights of the western sky. Her hair was the color of the dying sun, made glorious with the ruddiness that seemed to pour up from beyond the ocean; her hands were stained in the glow that for one breathless moment wrapped the earth in its embrace. Her eyes were wide open, her lips were parted. Beauty always hushed her into an awe that ached. She forgot all things but the sight of the dying day.

Suddenly a stone rolled down from the rocks above her; another followed it, and Clodah stirred; then before her she saw Thayer standing; he had caught both her hands in his, and was looking past her eyes into her innocent heart. Whatever he saw there made him smile with a triumph that thrilled her, and then he dropped her hands and took her in his arms and kissed her on the lips.

Slow tears were rolling down her cheeks when

he let her go. Her breathing was pitiful, and an unreasoning fright held her. But through the tears and the quick breathing, and rising triumphant above the terror, was something that made Thayer catch her to him again and hold her tenderly.

"I told you I would come back sometime," he said softly. "Did you forget?"

Her head moved once against his breast. She was shaking violently. He soothed her quietly.

"I didn't forget," he murmured. "I couldn't come before, but the time came when I couldn't keep away. Dear, you haven't said a word to me yet."

He put his hand beneath her face and raised it with gentle force. It was very white and drawn.

"I hae naught to say," she whispered with closed eyes.

Thayer bent and laid his lips on them. At his touch they opened, and she looked at him with a tenseness about her mouth that made the gaze a wild one. His eyes glowed and narrowed into hers, and suddenly a rush of color that was almost purple swept over the girl, lit-

erally drenching with a faint moisture her face and throat. She moved her eyes from side to side as if seeking for rescue, and then as they at last came back to him, she turned suddenly and hid them against his heart. There was surrender in every limb, surrender whose fulness she did not realize. That the moment was his Thayer knew, and he seized it.

"I want you to go away with me," he murmured. "I've come for you, dear. I want to take you away with me just as soon as you can go." He paused. Clodah did not raise her head. Thayer felt a sensation of pleasure at the yielding relaxation of her figure. After all, the girl was a wonderfully beautiful creature, how beautiful he had hardly realized. She had stirred in his arms, had flung one rounded arm about his neck.

"I didna know it before," she whispered with a catch in her voice like that of a child who has sobbed itself to rest. "I didna know it before, an' I dinna know all what it means now; but, ah, I canna stay here alone an' live!"

Thayer's arms tightened about her. "When can you go with me?"

She glanced at him in doubt. "When—do you want me—now?"

"I want you now," he answered in a sudden flame of desire. But Clodah was thinking with wide eyes of this new demand, and remained tranquil before his passionate gaze. In all his wanderings, and they had been many, Thayer had never seen such an absolute rest of the senses in a girl of her age and growth. She was absolutely innocent; she was incapable of giving a name to the feeling that he woke within her, but from her low-breathed confession he well knew that the dreams of the past year, devoid as they were of all love in the earthy sense, had reared for him a shrine in her heart before which had been poured out the purest worship of him his life had known.

Thayer was a man in whom the passions had had so much indulgence that it took more than a passing whim to rouse them to keenness, but before this girl he suddenly felt the fire and longing of his early youth. He smiled slightly as he laid his cheek against her ruddy hair. After all, his passion for art and his love passion might perhaps prove one and the same thing.

He must have this girl at any cost, that he had decided; but the cost to himself might not after all be so great. She was beautiful, and she loved beauty; she was quick of perception; three qualities of the metal of wifehood that render it more malleable in the matrimonial furnace. Even if it must mean marriage, and all along he had been inwardly certain that it would mean that before he could get her away, it might turn out for him the best of fortune. Then no more searches for nymphs, no more models with beautiful faces and heavy hips; no more girls whose arms were perfect and whose ankles made him swear beneath his breath at their thickness. He had seen what Clodah's face could express with only her limited range of feeling and emotion. What could it not develop into under his tutelage and molding?

All this time he had been holding her in the same close embrace. Now he spoke quickly, triumphantly.

"Come," he said, "take me to your father."

She shrank back a little. A sudden change swept over her face. All of the old worry and trouble came into her eyes.

"Feyther—he—" She stopped short and looked at Thayer in half terror. For some reason he was instantly reminded of Mrs. Davenport's not too subtile hint of a lover.

"What is it, dear?" he asked with more than an idle curiosity in his voice.

Clodah hesitated. "I canna tell you," she said at length. "Feyther—" She stopped again.

Thayer laughed. "Come," he repeated, and with his arm flung carelessly about her he led her down the cliff and up the long slanting path to the distant cottage in whose door as they drew nearer they saw The Rohan standing.

Clodah would have broken away, but Thayer held her close, and under the growing fire in The Rohan's eye they came up the path together. When they were within thirty feet of the cottage The Rohan rose and came down to meet them. His face kindled to a white anger with the flash of recognition that woke within his eyes when he was but a few feet distant from Thayer. He strode swiftly over the intervening space and laid his hand with a rude heaviness on Clodah's shoulder. Thayer's arm was still about her.

"I recall ye. Gi' her me!" They faced each other in the gloomy dusk, the slender girl between them. Thayer did not stir.

"Unloose her, I say! Man, gi' me my daughter!" There was a great cry in his heavy voice. With a swift, harsh movement he wrenched Clodah free. Thayer staggered back, momentarily overcome by the fierce assault. Then he held out his empty arms.

"Clodah!" he said, his voice no more than a whisper. She was standing in her father's grip. How cruel it was she did not know until the next morning, when her white arm showed blue and purple.

"Clodah!" Thayer cried again, a note of despair in his voice.

"Feyther!" she whispered with pleading unutterable. The Rohan stood mute. While the soul is in travail there is no cry.

"Feyther!" she cried again. The silence of the island night was about them. Below them murmured the sobbing sea in its unending woe. Suddenly she threw up her arms. Thayer had turned as if to go down to the wooden pier.

"Feyther!" she cried again, and then with a

swift little rush she threw off his hand and running to Thayer flung herself into his arms. And again over her bent head the two men looked at each other. But this time there was no measuring of power. The older man stood with a despairing relaxation in all the length of his mighty frame. The younger man stood erect and victorious, for in his arms by her own free choice he held the island's treasure.

"Come in my house," The Rohan said at length, after a moment full of bitter renunciation. "Come in my house, an' tell me there what manner o' man ye are. Clodah, 'tis nae for ye to hear, till I learn the man that ye hae cast off feyther for, what he be. But ye can trust feyther, lass?"

Clodah was sobbing bitterly. One arm was still flung about Thayer's neck, but the other she reached out to her father.

"I didna know," she sobbed pitifully. "I didna know till he came to-day. I hae na deceived thee, feyther. I didna know mysel'."

The Rohan's eyes were wet. "Go to yir room, lass," he said softly.

Until she disappeared within the cottage door

the two men stood looking after her. Then The Rohan led the way sternly to his hall, the hall where the primitive justice of the island was meted out. In the center of the room he drew himself up with a dignity that even at that moment Thayer confessed to himself he had never seen surpassed. He fastened on the artist a gaze that seemed striving to pierce the veneer of raiment and flesh to the inner spirit that they clothed.

"Now, man," he said briefly, "I remember ye, though I know ye not. The name ye bear dinna matter. But in God's name, what manner o' man be ye?"

For one calculating moment the two men faced each other in the dusky room; The Rohan massive and rugged and directly simple, Thayer polished and alert and many stranded. Humanly speaking, the victory lay already with the younger man. And yet in the preparatory pause that followed The Rohan's challenge, Thayer, with his peculiar power of surveying from a throbless standpoint all that came to him in life of joy or sorrow, or even threatening tragedy, felt a first cynical doubt thrill him, a doubt of ultimate success. In all his mad journey to the island it had been Clodah, Clodah, Clodah that had filled his brain. It was Clodah's consent he had to gain; that was the task that lay before him. His arrogant self-confidence in that success had been justified. Yet in this moment of amazed, resentful doubt he threw back his shoulders with a sudden tenseness of his whole body. The primal instincts, self-defense, pro-

tection of his own, were tightening every nerve, keying them up to a recklessly high pitch. For the first time, mentally as well as physically, he was facing The Rohan man to man. He had wooed the peasant girl. He had yet to win the daughter, to wring from the father some sort of acquiescence. Spirit had challenged spirit, and to the simple inner royalty of The Rohan Thayer's swift self-guard was an involuntary homage. Then he caught up the glove thrown down.

"Sir," he said, gently, "that I am a man of note in my own country, a man of some wealth, a little fame, a man who can give your daughter a life of such luxury as she has never known,—all this will count as nothing in the face of your demand. Before it I am speechless. How may a man know himself, or knowing, how may he tell it out to others? If you do not know me, what do I know of her? Yet I am filled with a great longing for her. I have come this journey after a weary year that should have served to drive her from my mind. Instead, it has driven me here in spite of myself. Sir, if you will not listen kindly to my pleading for

myself, let me entreat you for your daughter's joy. I found her down yonder dreaming like a child. All this long year of separation she has held me in memory, and without her knowledge she was ready for me with a love that fills me with rapture and humility. I ask your daughter of you. I ask to bear her away with me from her home and her people to my own land. I shall deal with her tenderly. I do not plead for my own happiness now. It is hers I am seeking at your hands."

The Rohan had never moved his brooding eyes from Thayer's face. "Ye are takin' more on yirsel' than I asked o' ye," he said with a harshness that made the blunt speech blunter. "Ye are speakin' to the lass's feyther. He has cared for her happiness a' her life. He can be trusted wi' it yet a while. 'Tis nae in keepin' wi' her dignity that ye plead so soon for her joy wi' ye."

The two men stood before each other poised as for a brute contest of physical power. Their eyes shot defiance and wrath through the gathering gloom. Yet it was desperate strength matched against desperate cunning. Thayer's white face turned a little whiter at this direct

rending of his sophistry. His jaw settled into a firmer line. He saw that The Rohan had yet another word to say and he waited.

"Ye mean me to infer ye hae nae one here to speak for ye an' yir modesty willna let ye tell it out honest what ye be. Ye be a friend o' the Davenports?" It was demand, question, yearning assertion, all in one.

Thayer hesitated. Why not? Yet never in all his life had he held up a woman's body before his own to ward off a death blow.

"I don't know Mr. Davenport," he said slowly. "That I was with Mrs. Davenport's party last summer was purely an accident."

The Rohan clenched his hands. He stepped forward and covered in one stride the narrow space between him and Thayer.

"Man," he said, a white heat of anger thrilling along his voice, "hae ye nae sense o' honor in yir world, nae sense o' what's befittin' the honor o' a little maid? Ye hae crept frae off the dividin' sea on to my land. Ye slunk like a thief along my shore. Ye came on my lass sittin' wi' her innocent dreams an' ye stole my lamb awa'. She dinna know hersel', she says. Nae, she dinna

know hersel'. There be a man on this island that loves her true, that dares to say boldly he loves her. 'Tis a word ye haena uttered to me yet. Truly, if it be a man loves a maid he may tell her feyther it for the comfort it may be. I be distressed for my lass, yes, I be distressed; yet she has the blood o' her feythers in her, an' it is strong red blood. But as for ye, go down to yir boat an' sail awa' an' leave my land to the peace that held it before ye blighted it wi' yir courtly presence. Sail awa' an' leave my lass to me an' him that loves her an' isna afraid to tell it out to the man that loves her most o' all. She be simple an' untaught o' the world. Ye know naethin' else. Ye canna mate wi' each ither an' hae joy one in the ither. Not Heaven itsel' can work that miracle. Therefore I bid ye go. I know weel ye hae left misery in yir wake, but it's naethin' to the torment that would follow did I let ye stay. Ye are ower confident too when ye claim the lass's life be bound up in yir own. Ye hae brought a fever wi' ye an' she is fast held now in the delirium o' it, but she will get ower it, O yes, she will recover. She has the blood in her veins that dinna let a bramble

poison it, though the scratch may smart sore. She will hae her feyther's love for a lotion, an' it has never yet failed to heal."

The Rohan's voice grew more and more stern as he went on. Thayer stood in silence, his face settling into hard, rigid lines. He let a little cold, scintillating smile that had lurked in his eyes come out and play, shadowlike, about his mouth.

"I think you do not realize, nor does she, how entirely she is mine," he murmured in a cold, sweet voice that cut like a surgeon's lancet. "And suppose I leave and allow her to stay behind? She is a child, yes, and she has scratched herself. And up to now her blood has been fresh and cool and healing. What if the fever in it nurses the bramble poison and carries it through her from head to foot? What if the poison is already coursing its fatal way through her? And if I choose not to let her stay behind, but bid her come, do you dare think the choice is longer yours or hers? Down yonder—when she threw herself here—"

Thayer flung out his arms. The Rohan started. A shiver ran over him. His face was drawn

with the agony that had shot through him when the girl had thrown him off. Thayer stood before him in a cold, almost indifferent triumph. He stared calmly at The Rohan in his convulsive waverings. And as he looked another doubt, born of his own taunting words, stabbed him with a swift pain. It was one thing to bear the girl away in the face of a great wrath that denied. It was another thing to carry her off, leaving behind this bent and tortured figure, broken on the wheel of an outraged fatherhood. There drifted across him like a haunting fragrance a memory of the girl's exquisite surrender. All the unutterable beauty of it appealed to him afresh. It wove a spell about him that caught his heart and stopped its beating. Something broke within him, the settled coldness of a selfishness sublime in its absolute disregard of others. It warmed into pulsating life as it rushed through him, finding an outlet at last in short, feverish speech.

"Let me have her," he cried. "I have won her. I can not be denied. Fairly or foully I have won her. She is mine. She loves me. Loves me

with a love—I say it in all humility—she will never give to another man. I can not go away without her. See, it is the fate of her life. She did not know she loved me till I came. Suppose I had not come; suppose I had followed good advice and stayed away, she might have lived and died here in her island home. This lover—she might have wedded him and borne him children and reared them in the pure ways she has trod all her life. But that is changed forever now. If she does not marry me she will never marry him. It was meant to be through all the ages. Why should I have been led here a year ago? Why should this year have been one of sorrow and despair and vain endeavor? Why should life have baffled me at every turn till I came at last and found her mine, mine, mine?"

He seized The Rohan by the arm. The older man looked at him with eyes blinded by despair. He saw Thayer's face drawn now and haggard; he perceived a sincerity in his eyes; he heard the ring of it in his voice, felt the thrill of it in the close personal contact. He looked and looked into the white, tense face before him. It was as

if he could never rest until he had probed to the soul of the man who faced him. When he spoke despair wavered in his tones.

"I dinna know ye yet, man, who or what ye be. I dinna know yet what the feelin' be ye bear my bairn nor how ye came to feel it. I am full o' doubt. Yet, somethin' in yir words rings true. Ye yearn after her, ye say. Mayhap ye mean love. Man, be honest wi' yirsel' an' me this hour. A' that ye say o' the lass an' her love for ye I know is the truth, howe'er much I resent ye sayin' it. But I know this, if ye dinna know it, that in spite o' yir pleadin' an' her grief I be strong enough to say ye both nay if it be for her good. Better that she die o' sorrow wi'out ye on her island home than that she live in sorrow wi' ye in that grand home o' yir own. I be strong enough to say nay, an' in spite o' yir arrogance, man, I dinna feel yet that yir power could take her awa' wi'out her feyther said for her to go. But nae man has the right to take the power o' God into his own weak hands an' say for ithers that here be joy an' that way sorrow. An' so I hesitate. But ye know the

purposes o' yir heart, what ye mean for my bairn. O, be honest this hour wi' her an' me an' yirsel'."

Thayer felt a faint sickness steal over him as The Rohan spoke, a physical sickness induced by a nerve strain too great for endurance. For one blazing second he saw straight down the days to come. The purposes of his heart! Then he shut his eyes against the revelation, against the sudden mad impulse to throw up the doing of the deed. What would it not mean for him if he surrendered now? A wild despair shook him, a despair so blind and frantic that it swayed him helplessly. What if he lost her now! His brain was one great doubt. His vaunting self-pride had died, shriveled into a withered heap of nothingness. The insolent pride of his bearing had dropped away from him as a rotted garment. For the moment he trod Chaos; he walked in Emptiness. It was with the shadow of their wastes and solitudes graying his face that he turned at last to The Rohan.

"Give her to me," he pleaded thickly. "I shall be tender with her. No man could be other than

tender with her. She shall be my treasure as she has been yours. Let me take her, let me take her!"

When The Rohan raised his head it was the face of an old man that Thayer looked upon.

"After all," he said, hoarsely, "the lass hersel' has decided it. Down yon'er when she cast me off—her feyther off—it couldna be a bad thing she loved to cast her feyther off for—I said I was strong to say ye nay. The strength has gone frae me. I be bowed an' bent. I would ye were a friend o' Davenport's. He is a man I trust. I canna trust ye yet. I be honest wi' ye. I canna trust ye yet. But I halt in sendin' ye awa'. I dare nae do it. For 'twould be the death o' her, the death! Ye be a great man, ye say, an' ye can gi' my bairn gold an' plenty. Ah, yes, but there be better than gold, an' that be love. She wouldna miss the wealth wi'out ye, for she has never had it. But wi' all yir wealth an' greatness if she go awa' wi' ye an' ye fail to gi' her the greatest thing o' life, I doubt nae but she'll turn in longin' to her feyther an' his love that never failed."

Thayer went abruptly over to the window that overlooked the harbor where his boat lay rocking with the sea. His temples were throbbing painfully. His throat was dry and contracted. He thought with a strange, aching loneliness of the innocent girl, sent away to her room while two men held her life in their hands and probed with blunt, unpractised fingers into its quivering embryonic possibilities. He could see her lying on her bed shaken with the almost tearless sobs that had torn through her down there in the path before her father's door. Suddenly a passionate joy shot its stinging way through him. He had not heard The Rohan leave the room. He had not heard the door softly unclose behind him. But the new thrill of delight made him turn. There on his arm lay a small, white hand. By him, only as high as his shoulder, stood The Rohan's daughter, her face so white that she looked like a spirit in the gloom of her father's judgment hall. When she spoke her voice was low and wonderfully controlled. Thayer only stared at her dumbly. For the moment the two seemed to

have changed places. It was Thayer who was unstrung. It was the slender girl who held him and herself in wonderful restraint.

"My feyther bade me come in here," she said clearly. Through the dusk her eyes shone like stars upon him.

Thayer uttered a low, nerveless cry. The old faintness came back on him. His poise was gone. The victory was his, but it stung like humiliation. This girl before him—his! He had won, but at what cost, by what dastard deed? The old throbless standpoint had vanished. He seemed to himself one great aching nerve, one tearing throe of pain. The purposes of his heart! In the moment of his supreme triumph Thayer tasted the sodden ashes of a mighty self-defeat.

Two days later, in the glow of another gorgeous sun-setting, a boat set off from Eilean Rohan, rowed by six lusty islanders. In the center of the boat Clodah sat within the arms of her husband. On the shore were gathered the men and women and children of Rohan, those who had watched over the delight of The Rohan's heart with as tender a love as they felt for their own. Only Donald Ross was absent. On the evening of Thayer's arrival he had come to The Rohan's home, had seen the artist, and then with an insistence against which his chief could not prevail, had demanded to see Clodah. What had passed between them she did not tell in detail, and what she told was told only to her father in incoherent murmurs, but that night Ross left the island and had not yet returned.

In the late afternoon of the second day after Thayer's arrival his marriage with Clodah had been celebrated by the aged minister of the

island, and this night they were leaving. How the matter had been accomplished with such swiftness no one who witnessed the simple ceremony knew, least of all the participants in it. But accomplished it had been.

Just before Clodah stepped into the boat, while some trifling trouble with the ropes was being righted, her father drew her away from the rest and looked with dumb questioning into her eyes.

"My heart is sore wi'in me, lass," he said. "It has been a' hasty and nae in keeping wi' the dignity of a maid. But since the ither night I haena known ye for my daughter. Some strange change, swift as the changin' o' the sea, has come o'er ye, and weel I know it is the mighty power o' love. I couldna keep ye wi' me longer. If I kept yir body I should be lonelier than I shall be now, for yir spirit would hae been beyond yon'er sky. An' so I let ye go. Yir womanhood has come wi' a rush, lass. I know nae the man ye hae taken. That he longs after ye I see weel, and if he loved ye nae why should he come back this weary way for a simple lass like ye? An' so I let ye go. Wi' a stranger I

let ye go. But remember weel," his voice deepened with its effort at control, "remember weel the law o' yir island, that if a maid shall wed a man, and go from her land, and if he die or desert her, she shall come back and spend her days wi' her people. An', lass o' mine, were it nae that 'twould mean yir death o' happiness, I could pray that ye be sent back!"

His voice rang out hoarsely, all the agony of his great doubt echoing through it. But Clodah lifted her face with a light shining on it that comforted her father in many a weary memory.

"I shall come back, feyther," she said steadily, "if—there be need. But if the need come it will bring a weary day for thee and me. For he is the joy o' my heart, an' though I know not," her voice fell, "though I know not what awaits me, an' though the whole way be in shadow, I must go with him, an' O my feyther, my feyther, I bless thee and thank thee for letting me go."

And so with her father's blessing echoing in her ears and the cries of her people ringing about her, with her husband's arm holding her close, and the crimson shadows of the western

sun shining on her face that already shone from the light of joy within, Clodah Rohan passed from her island and people to another shore and race of which she had no faintest knowledge, with her only guide a man whom she had not yet called by his given name, a man of whom the only woman who knew him as he was had said his temperament was his curse. And yet Kirk Thayer, as his keen eye flashed along the stretch of the island's coast line and took in the dramatic beauty of the primitive farewell, vowed to himself that if the girl beside him would let herself be happy she should be made so. In that moment he almost loved her.

Thayer and his wife started directly for London, but they stopped midway for a day in order that Clodah's simple wardrobe might be supplemented to a degree that better became the wife of a great celebrity. With all the delicacy of suggestion at his command Thayer found it impossible to prevent the look of hurt pride that swept over Clodah's face at the first mention of new clothes. It was followed immediately by a submission that almost irritated him. As they were about to enter a shop she touched his hand timidly.

"I scarce know what is fittin' for me now," she murmured. "Dinna ask me anything. Buy what you want me to wear an' I will put it on."

Thayer laughed down into her eyes, and under his look the shadow fled from her face.

"You couldn't tell me to do anything that would please me more," he said. "Sometimes I think I've a good deal of the feminine in me, for

I like to dress people as little girls dress their dolls, and I have in my mind's eye exactly what you need, if only we can find it here. In a few weeks we'll run over to Paris, and bring trunks full of things back with us. This is just to tide over."

While he talked Clodah listened in a half conscious dream. That she was no longer Clodah Rohan, that she was the wife of this man who to her represented all that was good and true and noble she could not believe, had not yet begun to grasp. She was afraid and she adored in one and the same breath. She stood by while he had stuffs brought out; dismissed with contempt materials and garments that to her unaccustomed eyes were rich enough for the garb of kings; and finally out of the whole stock which the shop-mistress placed at his disposal he deigned to take two or three summer gowns, a tailor suit, a deal of lingerie, and one garment which he had seized on from the first moment he saw it as the only thing in the shop that nearly approached his idea of what he wanted. It was a dull rose velvet, whose coloring had been subjected to acid fumes that gave

it strange and indefinable tones. A faint heraldic design was sprayed over it, but so dimly that the design seemed but a part of the light and shade. Thayer turned to Clodah and whispered to her.

"The first night we are in London—and that's to-morrow night—you are going to put on this gown, and pile your hair up high. O, I'll show you how. Didn't you know you had married a hair-dresser, one who might have made his fortune were the court happy enough to have engaged his services? Ah, well, he has his princess now, his princess of the ruddy locks, and he is going to get his fill of torturing fair heads!"

Clodah laughed in happy shyness. "I dinna think I shall know any more about putting on the dress than putting up the hair. 'Tis too lovely for just me."

Her eyes shone as she looked at the dull shimmer of the velvet, and she smoothed it softly, impulsively. Just then the shop-mistress returned with assistants who were to help her in the alterations that Thayer had insisted must be made with all despatch, so he left her in their care for a short time while the fitting of the

gowns was being made, and in the interim he strolled about the town. He struck away from the business streets, and found a quiet thoroughfare leading out to a little park. He stopped when he reached it, and stood with his arms resting on the railing that cut it off from the main road. Never had he felt so full of the inspiration to hard work. Never had his brain been more alert, more quick to receive impressions, more open to suggestion. His fingers quivered with the nervous desire of genius. His whole body felt the electric glow of a great thought and a great ability.

"She is perfect," he thought. "She has pure beauty of face and form, and her soul is full of the fire that gives feeling and emotion. She was too good for that desert spot. And I shall make her happy. I shall make her happy," he repeated defiantly, "Hilda notwithstanding. I'm beginning to think her straightlacedness on the subject of posing a good thing after all, for Clodah has a something in her face that Hilda lacked; an utter innocence of life and the sins of life. It must not go till I get it fastened on canvas."

He broke off nervously, biting and moistening his lips as if consumed by a raging thirst. In his mind was nothing but the single thought of his painting and his model. If he had done what his desire impelled him to do he would have taken the girl off within the hour, whirled her away to London, and stood her up that night in his studio.

"These damn conventionalities," he muttered irritably. "I can't hurt her now, she'll be of no use to me if I'm not careful. Why were people created with feelings to be considered? I haven't any, thank God! And yet I don't call myself a cruel man. I don't torture cats or rabbits, couldn't cut up one to save my soul, even if I could accomplish by it what these old medicine men of modern civilization claim they are doing, finding out how to prolong life. I'd be kinder to cat and Christian, and let the secret die with the natural death of the feline's ninth existence. Hilda claims, though, that I am brutal where humanity is concerned. Well, am I? I hold the question is open for calm discussion at any rate. She says I care not for others' feelings. Granted! But any suffering resulting from that

lack of care is the fault of the others. Feelings are obsolete. I don't care for my own, and so far I don't break, even if I don't keep, the Golden Rule. She says I would dethrone everything for the elevation of my art. Granted again. But I dethrone myself for it, and even so far I demand no more of others than of myself. And still she says I'm brutal, and she won't stop saying it, and she'll repeat it many times when she hears of this. I'll write her as soon as I get back to London. Wonder if she'll throw me over for a bad lot, or if I can make her understand. I'm not brutal to Clodah. I shan't be. I like the child. At present she is unutterably charming. Will a weariness of her descend upon me and blight her charm? Perhaps, and yet I think not. Her beauty is not the sort that fades, and she will train as no girl I ever got hold of before had the possibilities of doing. She will have to learn things of life that she has never dreamed of, but if she takes the training calmly she will be none the worse. If it gives her a fever of primitive emotions—well, for her own good I shall have to try to administer antidotes. And then Hilda—if she be in

town and hears Clodah's story—will Clodah talk?—will call me brutal, brutal, brutal! And then—" He shrugged his shoulders and laughed amusedly.

"Ah, well, all that is in the hidden future. For the present, she is waiting for me, and the anticipation of what she will look and be in the studio at home to-morrow night ought to carry me over the weary wait till I can dare to begin work on her." He pulled out his watch, calculated that the women he left about her ought to have had time enough to make gowns instead of merely remodeling them, and went leisurely back to the shop.

Despite the time he had given them the women had not yet completed their task, and while he was waiting he went through the show-cases again, and picked out a trinket or two and a russia leather pocketbook in addition to the order he had already placed to be delivered that afternoon.

When Clodah finally emerged from the fitting room the secret of her long delay was explained. She was wearing the soft gray tailor suit. It was her first long skirt, and she showed

consciousness of the fact in her walk, which was not so untrammeled by far as when she ran lightly down Red Rock in her short red skirt and heavy shoes. For the first time in her life Clodah felt the stricture of modern clothes, but her natural grace aided her in wearing her unaccustomed trappings well. Thayer looked his satisfaction, but said nothing till they left the shop. When they were finally started home he bent down and peered into her face.

"All the trouble over getting new clothes has gone, dear?" he asked. "You don't mind them now?"

Clodah hesitated; then a simple pride that sat very sweetly on her came to her rescue.

"I was sorry for—my feyther. He wouldna've wished that I should be lackin' in gowns. In my island the girls dinna let their husbands buy for them till they've been a whole year wed. It wasna because he would nae—"

Thayer laughed at her so directly that in a moment she laughed too.

"Your father has given me all that I desire of him. Then you had no time to get clothes, and you remember that I wouldn't let you bring

away even that wonderful carved chest of yours with its linen stores. Never mind, we'll go back some day soon and get it. And anyway, the customs of my island are different. We expect to begin buying for our wives the day after we marry them, and no pence that I've ever spent have afforded me more pleasure than those I deposited with the lady back yonder."

"Are you so well awa' wi' money?" she asked timidly.

"My dear child, your husband is an artist; what a fickle world is pleased, for the time being, to call a great artist. Consequently he has much money at one time or another, and his only fault, the one blemish on his otherwise spotless character, is that he doesn't keep it. It goes this way and that."

Clodah looked puzzled and a little hurt. Something in his tone rang false. He saw her thought in her eyes and mouth. They were like sensitive instruments.

"I have enough for you to have everything you want," he added, gravely. "Whenever you see any pretty gimcrack in a window that you want you are to go in and get it, and you are not

to feel that you must ask me if you may. You are to have your own purse, and you are to do with it as you choose."

They had reached their hotel by now, and when they were fairly in their sitting room he plunged into his pockets, and thrust into her hands a nondescript collection of notes, of gold, and of silver.

"So much for now!" he said. "That is all yours and you can spend it for what you choose." He stopped abruptly as he caught sight of one note she held, and began to rummage in his pockets again, only to bring his hands out empty.

"You'll have to lend me enough to get us to London, Clodah," he said boyishly. "I forgot and gave you my reserve fund!"

Her laugh rang out, and she put both her hands behind her in a sort of humming-bird defiance. It was the first touch of coquetry he had ever seen in her, and it added another point and a valuable one to her increasing list of possibilities. He half turned from her, but her new-found virtue did not stand that test. She threw

out her hands impulsively, and the notes and gold fell to the floor in an indiscriminate clutter.

"I care naught for your gold," she said with a ring of passionate contempt in her voice. "It is mud to me. I care naught but for—"

Thayer drew her into his arms, and rubbed his cheek softly against her shining hair.

"And you can care for me—still!" he murmured with something akin to repentance in his voice. "Dear heart, how could you have grown up so unutterably a child!"

She drew shyly away from him, and in a few moments they were picking up the money together like two children, and he brought out her new purse and showed her its different compartments, and in two of them she found the trinkets he had purchased for her while he was waiting in the shop. Later in the afternoon the parcels came, and there was much trying on, and Clodah attempted to play the passive doll and only succeeded in making of herself a bewitchingly shy girl. Thayer experimented with her hair, and then gave her a few lessons in its artistic arrangement. Later, after all the new

things were put away in the new trunk, and dinner was over, and the lovely twilight was heralding the coming of night, they sat down together beside an open window through which the winding river could be seen. Clodah surrendered herself to the silence of the closing day, to thoughts at whose wondering trend Thayer guessed with commendable directness. He glanced at her now and then as she sat by him in her childish white gown of soft flowing mull, and suddenly he bent over her.

"What made you come to me, Clodah?" he murmured. She looked up, startled by the abrupt question.

"Come to you—when?" she asked.

"When your father held you away from me."

She looked at him quickly.

"I could nae keep away," she murmured. "That's all I know. You were going to the boat. I could nae stay." After a timid pause she slipped her hand in his. "Was it right? I could nae do it again. I could nae hae done it then if I had stopped to think. But my heart had gone, and my silly feet followed." There was another silence which Clodah broke rest-

lessly. "We island folk get no letters, not often. I never wrote a letter in all my life. But I promised my feyther I would let him know how it is with me. Would you show me how to send it?"

"Can you write, Clodah?" Thayer felt an irresistible impulse to laugh at his question. Such a strange question for a man to ask in all seriousness of his lawful wife! But Clodah answered in all seriousness. The comical aspect of the case failed to appeal to her.

"Ah yes," she said proudly, gladly. "My brother George, he taught me to write. I can read, too," she added shyly.

"What have you read?" he asked idly, impelled thereto not so much from the desire to know as from the charm that her voice and innocence wove about the languorous night.

"I hae read the Bible," Clodah began reverently. "The sunsets and the last book are like each other. Don't you like Revelation?"

"Yes," Thayer murmured, but he spoke from a different vocabulary.

"An' then a few papers sometimes that my feyther would bring over from the mainland.

And then—ah yes,"—her eyes glowed,—"I've read a man that writes beautiful things, that goes like music. I don't know how you say its name, the name of the poem."

"Don Juan!" Thayer exclaimed in great amaze after her spelling of the title. "Where in the name of your guardian angel did you get hold of Byron?"

"Isna 't lovely?" Clodah said in great joy at having read something that some one of the great world recognized in common with her. "It was a book Maister Davenport left the summer he came to the island."

"Do you believe in Fate, Clodah?" Thayer asked gravely.

"Fate? If Fate be Providence."

"Well, that's another name for the same thing. People don't call everything by the same word. Call it Providence." He was smiling, was thinking how he should tell Hilda that the match was wholly of her making, hers and her husband's.

"Hae you read the book, too?" Clodah asked excitedly. "Is that the Fate you mean?"

"Yes," said Thayer in general answer. "Did you like the Don, Clodah?"

"Some," said Clodah with hesitation. "He was so unhappy I was sorry for him, and he didna know he was unhappy, either. It wasna right o' him to go away so much and leave the women folk sorry. But he was—I wonder if I should 'a loved him like the rest did!"

"I wonder if you have loved him," Thayer said softly. Clodah threw back her head and looked into his eyes with the only abandon she had ever shown him since the night she had flung off her father's detaining hand to throw herself into his arms.

"I hae loved you," she breathed.

The dim twilight was creeping over the earth, and they sat in silence until the distant woods and the gleam of the river were blotted out. Then Thayer gave her a soft little shake.

"Do you want to write to your father to-night?" he asked. "Because if you do it's time to begin. Then we'll take it down and post it together."

Clodah got up and went over to the table,

while he lighted the lamps and got some writing materials together. Then she spoke shyly.

"I told you I never wrote a letter before. Would you—mind telling me how to begin?"

Thayer laughed amusedly. What would he have said two months, two weeks, before at the thought of being writing-master to his own wife? And yet he was forced to confess that the situation was not without a unique and distinctly novel charm.

"Suppose I write you a letter, and then you can read it and see for yourself how it goes." He sat down and began to scribble rapidly. In a few moments he folded the sheet, put it in an envelope, sealed and addressed it, and then pulled Clodah down on his knee.

"Now," he began categorically, "I am the postman, and I have just brought you a letter from your husband, who has gone away on a fishing trip. You are opening it with all the delight you should properly feel after not having seen him for three days."

Clodah laughed like a child, and pulled out the letter impatiently. He watched her as she read, and smiled in purest fun at the slow

rising flush that spread over her face. She did not get along very rapidly, for Thayer wrote the fearful hand that belongs to genius, and finally he drew the sheet over to him and began to help her out.

"My dear little flower of a girl," he read, "I thought I should stay a week in the old haunts, but I shan't stay a day. I thought the fish would be the friends they had been, that the trees would welcome me back, that the birds would sing the same old notes, and that I should have a jolly good time. But the fish say, 'You aren't thinking of us; you let us nibble and you don't pay any attention to signs.' The trees say, 'Once you loved us dearly, but you love some one else better now.' The birds fly heavily and sing not at all; they only chirp sorrowfully, 'Our songs rejoiced you once, but now you are longing to hear another song from another throat, and we can sing you only the songs we know.' And so to-night I'm going to leave the fish in safety, and let the trees murmur to themselves, and say good by to the silent birds, and come back to you. And when I have heard again

the music of your voice, and felt your tender arms about my neck, and the fragrance of your breath against my cheek, I shall wonder how I ever could have left you for the woodland things; and I shall vow that when I go back to the woods I shall take the fairest flower with me, and the sweetest song, and the trees shall murmur above us both, and the flowers shall carpet the way for us two, and the birds shall sing their sweetest songs to welcome their lovelier songster. With a heart full of love, Kirk."

"It's more beautiful than all the poetry," said Clodah in a choked little voice that had in it what she could not put into words.

"Now then," said Thayer a few moments later, "you begin any way you want to and write to your father just what you would say to him if he were here, as nearly as you can do it. That's the secret of good letter-writing. Talk to people, forget you have a pen in your hand."

Clodah sat down in quite a flutter, notwithstanding Thayer's rules for polite correspondence, and he watched her as she bent herself to her task. Her pen moved very slowly; her fair

head was bowed low over the page. Many minutes went by. Finally Thayer, over by the window, heard a deep breath. He turned to find Clodah folding the sheet of paper on which she had been so busily at work. She was looking doubtfully at it and the envelope.

"In trouble?" he asked, coming over to her.

"Is it spoiled?" she asked fearfully.

He took the letter in his hands, folded so many times that it quite failed to mate with the envelope he had provided.

"It doesn't fit," he smiled, "but if you address the envelope right the folds of the letter won't matter." He smiled again as he saw the superscription: "The Rohan, Rohan Island, Great Britain." Then he slipped the letter into the envelope.

"What have you written to your father about us?" he asked idly. He felt a keen self-reproach as he saw her visible shrinking.

"I didn't mean that," he protested hastily. "Really, Clodah. Take it back; take it and seal it up. Of course, what you have written is for him and you. It was a foolish question; one that I didn't mean, dear."

But Clodah was closing his fingers over the letter he had returned to her.

"Read it," she said softly. "I can never tell you what is in my heart. I canna get the words. But it wasna so hard to write to my feyther."

Thayer took the letter with a feeling that he had been prying and impertinent, but resistance was vain. Clodah would not have understood his refusal, and would only have blamed herself for her first shrinking from his question. He opened the paper slowly. The girl stood with her back to him, and her head leaning against his arm.

"My own father," he read, "I am writing you after being away from you these hours to thank you again for letting me go. I think I see more clear how hard it must have been for you to let me go away without your knowing more what manner of man I have gone away with. But you did not do wrong in letting me go. He is my life, and without him I should die. I know you will miss me sore, but you did not do wrong in letting me come, and I did not do wrong in coming. While we were crossing the sea last

night I wondered if I was sinning in leaving you when it hurt you so sore to let me go. But I seem to have learned so many things since he came to get me and since I went away, and though there is a duty I owe my father, there is another duty I owe—I know not who or what. It is selfish to say it is a duty I owe myself, and it seems strange with all his world he could not live without me even if I had not come with him, so I know not if it is a duty I owe him. Perhaps you know, my father, what I mean. I know not. Many things I have learned, but many more are like shadows that will not be caught. I write to let you know I am content, I can not tell you how content, and I shall love you all the more for the great love I bear him. Sometime I shall come back to you, and tell you all that has happened to me in the great world. This is my first letter, so I fear it is not good. My father, my father! Your Clodah."

Thayer read the simple letter with a rising something in his throat that had been a stranger to it for many years. He was too innately the artist not to be intensely moved by the utter

simplicity of the phrasing, the directness of the unpretending Anglo-Saxon words. Then, too, he felt, as no other could, the hidden tragedies in every sentence, the unwritten confessions. He slipped the childishly folded sheet into its envelope and sealed it. He put it down on the table, where it lay forgotten till the morning; and then, moved by an emotion that for the first time was all tenderness for her, he stooped down and gathered Clodah into his arms.

The next evening they reached London. Thayer had telegraphed his man, and that most perfect of servants, trained into his perfections through many bitter storms and much love of his master, had all things necessary for the welcoming of his master's bride. How astounded he had been at the terse message which announced so portentous a change in the artist's *ménage* does not concern the progress of this story, but his sole and only comment thereon is worth repeating if only for its brevity: "Poor lady!" Hughes knew his master as none save one knew him, and his opinion on all that concerned Thayer in matters domestic, social, physical and moral, was worth the great trouble necessary to obtain it.

The beautiful home never looked more beautiful than in its gala dress for the bridal pair. Flowers were everywhere, and Hughes' own careful hand was apparent in Clodah's room, where

roses nodded and lovely ferns waved in the summer breeze. She looked blindly about her as Thayer led her into the hall of the home that was now hers, and when he left her for a little time at the door of her room she stood in a sort of shame in the midst of the luxurious beauty. All this he had given her, and in return what had she to offer him? Only her love, a love too humble in its self-depreciation; too exalted in its spiritual yearnings.

At Thayer's desire she was to put on that night the one gown in her hurriedly prepared trousseau of which he unreservedly approved, and, mindful of his parting injunction to hurry, she began to drag it out of its box. She bathed her flushed face with feverish desire for the cooling water, and let down her wealth of shining hair. She tried to put it up in the intricate puffs and coils that Thayer had attempted to teach her the day before, but she tried in vain. She was tired and worn and hurried, and at last in utter despair she gathered it together in its two accustomed plaits and let them hang.

Hot tears hurried to her eyes as she got hastily into the wonderful rose velvet gown. It was

made in a quaint Empire style, and the low-cut neck revealed to Clodah all unsuspecting a beauty which up to this time she had not valued at anything like its true worth—a white, full, graceful throat set upon perfect shoulders. It failed to comfort her now, for she was struggling desperately against the cold splendor of her surroundings and the unnatural girl that the mirror flung back at her. It was all so stately, so cold, so lonely. And then her hair would not go up. It was well that Thayer's knock sounded when it did. She forced back her crowding emotions with a childish bravery, and tried hard to get the tremble out of her voice.

"What a Gretchen you look with those two pigtails!" he cried gaily. "But aren't you going to be the stately lady to-night?"

Something in the doubtful way she touched her hair and the tremble of her lips told him the secret of her undeniable dejection,—a small part of the secret.

"You must have a maid to do all the tiresome work for you pretty soon," he went on as he pushed her down on a chair and began to

manipulate her braids. "We won't have her till later in the autumn, but she'll save your arms getting tired when she comes." In a few moments he bent over her and kissed her softly.

"You are so lovely," he said with all the sincerity in his voice that any woman could ask. And for the time the strangeness of the luxurious home went away.

Clodah felt a little undressed when she went into the small but perfect dining-room where Hughes moved about so gravely and respectfully; but if there had been anything out of the way surely her husband would have minded, she told herself with reiterating persistency. Her mounting excitement made her appetite small, and when the dinner was over and Thayer took her out of the room she felt relieved.

Without a word of explanation, they began climbing stairs, and finally on the third floor came to a door before which Thayer stopped and took out his keys. She looked up at him with a sudden flash of comprehension in her eyes, and he smiled down at her. In another moment they were within the great studio. She stood on the threshold while Thayer went in and lighted some

lamps, and touched a flame to the ready-laid fire in the fireplace.

Clodah's eyes were widening in the fashion they had when she was greatly moved. Such a room she had never dreamed of, all shadows and strange recesses. Rough easels and rich hangings were mixed with odd discrimination. Several picturesque Spanish chairs stood about with their upholsterings of leather and green velvet. Great columns stood here and there; busts, globes, stuffed beasts, plaster casts and musical instruments took up their full quota of space. The walls were covered with curious things: helmets, weapons, rare rugs. Lion and tiger skins lay on the polished floor.

Thayer was a thoroughgoing artist, and his could not be called the studio of pure luxury. Yet it did not lack rare and lovely things. He took Clodah all about it, let her turn over canvases, and rummage in corners, and all unwittingly get her hands much soiled with dust and half-dried paints. Such housekeeping she did not in the least approve, she told him after she came back to him with her hands still cold and moist from their recent bath.

As time went on she grew more and more quiet; her questions finally ceased, and she stirred restlessly rather than curiously about the studio. At last after she had exhausted for present delight the wealth of artistic paraphernalia so entrancing to unaccustomed eyes she came slowly, almost reluctantly, over to where Thayer was standing in the glow of the fire. The spires of light leaped up her throat and turned her hair to a glory that rivaled the flames. Her hands were clasped before her in the quaint childish fashion he remembered from the summer before, and though her body was facing him, her head was turned away till he could see only the intensely delicate profile. Her eyes were fastened on a curious pillar standing against the far wall.

"You asked me yesterday," she began in English that was painstakingly slow but otherwise quite pure, "how it was that I was such a child. Last night in all the strangeness of this land of yours I lay awake long hours thinking why. My feyther," it was her only lapse, "kept me all my life from girls and women. Something tells me they say things that men do not; that they talk about—things. And of course my feyther did

not tell me things. You have in your country here an old story—my brother told it me when I was a little child—of a princess who went to sleep and slept and slept, and finally a prince came and kissed her and then she woke up. When you—kissed me—that day you came—I think I had been sleeping all my life—you woke me—I am very ignorant—ignorant of much I should have known—" She stopped; her throat had swelled with an uncontrollable emotion, and it choked her utterance. Then with a little smile that grew from faintness to loveliness she went on.

"You told me last night that I must learn to look you straight in the eyes, that all wives should so look at their husbands, that my shyness made you want to shake me. Is that to be one task of mine? Well then—" Her fingers were twisting nervously, but she turned her face slowly toward him. For a second only she met his eyes; then she sank forward against his breast.

"Ah, I canna," she whispered breathlessly. "I canna, I canna!"

Thayer held her in his arms and laughed

nervously over her shining head. Her murmured words, her pure confession touched to pain some hidden chord within him just as her simple letter had moved him the night before. Her nature was unfolding before him so entirely in accord with her wonderful type of beauty and the Arcadian simplicity of her life environment that his sense of proportion could not but be gratified, his deepest artistic instincts completely satisfied, and a tender ecstacy filled him with every new revelation of her inner self.

Never before had he had a human soul beside him whose stirrings he could see and sway as he could this girl's; and never before in all his satiated life had he come in contact with a girl who, with no arts whatever, for the simple reason that she knew no arts, had been able to pierce through his outer man, and appeal directly to the most dominant feeling within him, the part of his nature that stood in him for what in current formula is called the spiritual side of man. Thayer would not have denied the existence within him of a spiritual nature; he would not have gone to the trouble. But in his philosophy of life he was a materialist of materialists, and he had long ago

reached that stage where life had forever lost its joy for him, and had become merely a span of years to live out in as great an oblivion of the world's woe as might well be. He had few emotions in the primitive sense of the word. He had deliberately killed them years before, and had done so because he felt thereby he was nearer an earthly Lethe.

But deep within him, hidden from all his world, lay a worship for the beautiful that ugly modernity had not dulled nor materialism blunted; a worship of the beautiful wherever he found it, in nature or in man, a worship poured out with lavish extravagance when it found a fitting shrine. In society he was called various things—cynic, roué, atheist, *viveur*. He was accepted without question for his personality, his wealth, his genius; yet mothers guarded their daughters well when he was about. Not but that almost any one of the virtuous matrons would have given him her choicest bud had he sought it, but they knew so well that he desired no marriage rites read over him; and his personality and attraction were such that more than one high-bred young maid had gone

a-mourning for a space after an evening or two spent in his dangerous vicinity.

Hilda Davenport was the only woman who had ever succeeded in reading Thayer correctly, and her success came not from endeavor, but from a sympathy between their natures as satisfying as it was unexplainable. She saw through his words and acts to his inner motives, and she knew, and truly, that his great weariness of the world, his intolerance of its conventions, sprang from a spirit that longed for beauty such as the world can never know, a beauty that is beyond human realization.

His ideals were so infinitely in advance of his age that he had early despaired of attaining them, and in his despair had plunged into the excesses for which he was noted, and by which he was judged. But though he had succeeded in deadening his emotions and feelings, though his philosophy was the extremity of materialism, though every painting he sent out was his despair rather than his glory since in it he had fallen so far short of his yearning, yet the spirit of reverence for beauty incarnate

dwelt within him and at the slightest beckoning leaped up with its old-time flame.

To-night there was a sob in his laugh as he pressed Clodah closer to him, not of love for the girl, of pride that she was so wholly his, but of unutterable appreciation of her artistic values. His esthetic nature she satisfied completely, and with that strange limitation of the artistic temperament he lost sight of the personal equation, nor knew that he ignored it. For the moment he was not holding Clodah Rohan, nor did he stoop at last to kiss his wife, but he was clasping in a passionate embrace an ideal harmony of soul and heart and spirit; and he pressed his lips on a face whose loveliness was the outer symbol of the inner self.

At last he pushed her head back against his shoulder. "Have you died and slipped away from me?" he murmured. The color came back to her pale cheeks with a rush.

"Ah, tell me," she pleaded, "tell me how I can serve you, what I can do for what you have done for me. It shall be anything that you ask, but ah me, you will ask me nothing, or else you will laugh and tell me to fetch you a book."

Thayer's eyes narrowed. "I'll tell you what you can do," he said slowly; "you can stand here on this white fur rug, and you can let me sketch you."

Clodah's lips parted in delight. "Me—am I fit to sketch? Ah, you said once that I looked like that beautiful lady who came that day. Did you mean it then or were you making a joke of me?"

He was walking around her; a new light was in his eyes. His lids were half closed while he examined her critically.

"Over there," he said. "Let your hand drop —no, clasp it—there! Mrs. Davenport! you are ten thousand times better!" The last sentence was under his breath. Clodah caught it and looked awed. He had said it as if it were one of the things he meant. She had learned before this that some of Thayer's sayings he did not mean, and she compromised the matter with her truthful conscience by calling them jokes. Certainly this was not a joke!

"Is she—Mrs. Davenport—here in London?" Clodah asked timidly, somewhat impressed by the altogether masterful and impersonal way in

which Thayer pulled her here and there. He did not hear her. He was lighting more lamps and putting them in what seemed to Clodah unreasonable places.

"Now stand quite still," he said at last. "We'll take this for a trial. Lower your chin—so. Just a moment."

He began to draw rapidly, and Clodah stood for life. After the manner of the inexperienced model, she was afraid so much as to breathe comfortably, and in a few moments she began to feel tense and strained. Not that she would have owned to discomfort at all; consequently she was much surprised and somewhat disappointed when in a surprisingly short time Thayer put down his crayon and came over to her. It was only for a change of pose, however.

"Raise your chin a trifle," he said absently. "So—no, the line is wrong." He frowned and came back to her. "Where are the hooks and things? You must have some low bodices made immediately." He had torn open the front of her gown and was pushing down the linen and lace beneath it. Then he folded in the velvet bodice to a degree that turned Clodah's cheeks

crimson. She stood resentful and ashamed. He had done it so strangely, not after the manner of a caress, but as if she were a doll, a lay figure, something without feeling. She felt that he was looking at her, but that he was not seeing her at all.

"There," he said shortly, "don't stir!" He went quickly back to his easel. "You can move your head now," he called out in a few moments.

But Clodah did not take advantage of his permission. She stood before him in the gracious pose he had put her in, with her hands clasped lightly in front of her, the long, dull draperies flowing from her shoulders upon the polished floor, and with her head still in the same position in which he had placed it. A great resentment was welling within her, mixed with a heart-hurt that had come too soon. For the first time since her marriage she had been treated roughly, without consideration, with what she felt was an absolute lack of thought for her. For the first time she began to think that Thayer might have a life, a higher life from which she was to be impenetrably shut out. She was beginning to realize, still with humility, but with a

new stinging pain, the distance that lay between them and parted them; the weary obstacles of birth, of rearing, of environment.

She had felt a great awe take possession of her as she entered the studio that evening. She had felt a deeper awe of and reverence for Thayer as she went about the wonderful room that held properties, the tithe of which she did not know by name. But up to now in all the newness and the strangeness of her wedded life she had felt sure of his sympathy and care; now he was far from her drawing her silently, absorbedly. She dimly realized that ever since he had first suggested sketching her she herself had not once been in his mind.

After a little while thick tears gathered slowly in her wide-open eyes. Her lips quivered with the unsubdued force of the sobs she was resolutely choking down. She was learning the pains and enduring the pangs of absolute loneliness. Her first terrifying fear of the new life that lay before her came to her as she stood motionless before the dying fire, with her husband at some little distance from her, working with a rapt look on his face that, had she turned her

head to see it, would only have added to her pitiful solitude. She had thrown off father and people to follow this stranger. For the first time she felt how great a stranger he was to her.

Half an hour passed. Suddenly Thayer called to her with a ring in his voice that she knew and loved.

"Come over, my lady, and see yourself, and then ask me if I think you lovely!"

She brushed the two great tears from her eyes, the only ones that had come. Then she went over to him, the unaccustomed length of her velvet gown trailing richly behind her. Thayer flung his arm about her and together they stood before the drawing. Clodah thought the effect as a whole rather queer. There were so few lines, and over it all there were great blocks of dark and light, but something in the line of the draperies caught her eye, and she touched in unconscious rapture the lovely gown she wore. She glanced at Thayer. His face was full of an enthusiasm she had never seen before.

"I know I can get your face," he said not at all to her, "I know your eyes already, and your figure—"

He stopped and looked down at her. She had slipped one timid arm upward about his throat.

"You don't love me only because you think I am lovely?" she said anxiously. It was all that she let escape her of that half-hour of suffering.

It was easy to answer Clodah, and Thayer simply smiled into her eyes till she laughed happily and buried her face in his arm. Then they went about together and put out the lights around the room, all save the flame of the dying fire. Clodah stopped suddenly by the queerly carved pillar with its heavy chains that she had noted before.

"Isna 't queer," she cried softly with a pretty change to her childhood tongue, "how one 'll mind things! That day a year agone you came, I can always see the white wings o' the ship that brought you. An' four days back, I'll ne'er forget a little white flower that lay beneath your feet as you came down the cliff to greet me. An' to-night—I think I couldna hae told my lack o' knowledge if I hadna had something to look at an' think about while I was tellin'. I'll ne'er

forget the ship nor the flower. 'An' I'll ne'er stop rememberin' long as I live, the shape o' the post and the hideous smile o' the head on its top. Isna things queer!"

Thayer had been staring at her curiously. A cynical little smile had flashed over his face, but it had quickly gone and a frown had come instead. Then he laughed harshly.

"Yes," he said, "things are queer. Come, it's getting late."

Clodah rose early the next morning only to find that Thayer had risen before her. There lacked yet a little time till breakfast, and a sudden curiosity impelled her to run up to the studio for a new glimpse of the fascinating creature that Thayer had brought into life the night before. To her astonishment she found strewn about the room countless other sketches of her, mostly faces; faces in every conceivable position, some shoulders that ended abruptly at the throat and leisurely at the fore arm; some figure sketches, figures bare, figures draped, figures bent in every imaginable way. To one who knew Thayer's methods the fact would have been instantly apparent that some dominant idea had possession of his mind to the exclusion of all things else, even rest and sleep. Clodah only stared in mystification, and Thayer, coming in search of her, found her bending over the

sketches with a "mustn't-touch" docility that sat very sweetly on her.

"You haven't seen my treasure after all," he said when he had turned them all over for her, and had recklessly torn some of them into shreds. He went over to a distant table and returned with a drawing that he held up before her, while he watched with delight the color creep into her face.

"Did you draw me while I was asleep? Do I look like that?"

"I felt like working last night, so I came back up here to see what I could do with your face without you standing up before me. This" —he touched the drawing with great satisfaction—"I came down and drew from life, put a candle where it wouldn't fall too much on your face, and for four or five minutes worked for dear life. Isn't it a dear little thing!" He held it off at arm's length and viewed it critically.

It was certainly that. In some way he had caught in a few strokes the unconsciousness of sleep, and had put it all in the face of a sleeping child. Clodah continued to gaze at it in won-

der. Finally she spoke with a little catch of joy in her breath.

"Why, if I look like that—I thought it was because you cared for me that you thought me lovely, but if I look like that—"

"Vain child!" Thayer said gravely, all to see the confusion come that he knew would overwhelm her. In the midst of it he laughed at her comfortably, and, tucking her arm within his, he led her away to a little covered balcony, where their breakfast was waiting for them.

"Do you find it too tiresome to stand up for me to draw you?" he asked as they were sitting there when the meal was over, from pure laziness to move.

"I love to," she answered quickly.

"Then suppose we work a little this morning," he suggested indolently. "And let me try you in something else for a change—say that little red skirt and all the trappings that I carried you off in—that is, if you still have them. Oh, you brought them along, did you?" as she nodded vigorously. "Well then, put your hair down in two tails, and put on the island frock exactly as you were accustomed to wear it, and

then come up to the studio, say in about an hour. You'll be busy till then about getting your things unpacked, won't you? And I have some letters to write that can't be put off any longer."

He left Clodah at the door of her room and disappeared within the studio, where he stood looking with satisfaction and dissatisfaction mingled at his work of the night before. Then he lighted a cigar and sat down by a writing table, where he began to write with a smile on his face that his correspondent, had she been by to see it, would have recognized and made haste to destroy. He began his letter abruptly.

"Your felicitations, dear Madam, on my happiness. On the night you left London I left London. On the afternoon (presumably; 'tis more dramatic thus!) that you arrived in Russia I had gone beyond the north of Scotland and was climbing the cliffs of Eilean Rohan. There I found 'a fairy princess sleeping and I woke her with a kiss.' You will not understand the quotation. It is her own confession, and I would add my humble witness that it is a true one. A more delicious awakening it was never man's lot

to assist in. For once in my unworthy life I feel its unworthiness. For once I know regret for a fevered past. For once I am almost steeped in a love that, born of the senses, is fast becoming what our frisky neighbors across the channel call in their delicious nomenclature *le spirituel.* And the one who has worked all this wonderful change in your world-weary, selfish friend, dear Hilda, is none other than our little redbird princess of a summer ago. Will your respect for my executive ability rise beyond decorous bounds when I tell you that I wooed, won, wedded, and (to continue the pleasing alliteration) wended in the short space of two days? The maid yielded, the father consented, the priest blessed, the island sailors rowed us to the mainland, and—oh yes, the quondam lover at whom you so ingeniously hinted, disappeared. Have I been reckless? Perhaps. Abominable? Never! Clodah is as happy as it is given helpless mortals to be, and I am lost in the sight of her happiness so far as to get a taste of it now and then myself. She worships you, I think, though she is shy on the subject of worship in general even with her lord and master. When you at

last deign to return to the London you have left desolate, Mrs. Thayer will join me in welcoming you, and all the doubt and anger you are doubtless feeling now will, at the sight of her happy face, melt like frigidity before the tropic sun. In addition we shall both be delighted to show you our united works of art. Your friend, whose cynicism and worldliness is fast becoming absorbed in uxorious bliss, Kirk Thayer.

"Honestly, Hilda, she is the loveliest creature physically that ever trod this miserable earth of ours, and her innocence when I took her is beyond belief. When I tell you her knowledge of life and love was empty nothingness I hope you will take the words literally as they are spelled. And somehow through all the fever of quick courtship and early marriage it has lasted. I confess to you I have truly tried to brush away the bloom as lightly as it may be done, and I feel some degree of humble pride in my success. She is delicious, charming; she is even developing an embryo coquetry, and she is the happiest child, thanks to her white soul, in the British Isles. Her father was loath to give her up,

and for some reason distrusted me. I confess to you again that the hour he gave me was as *mauvais* as if it were a court alliance and I a too aspiring cowherd. But I have the strength of mind sufficient to admire even where the sentiment is not returned, and I freely concur in the opinion expressed by Mr. Davenport, whom I have never had the pleasure of meeting, by the way, that The Rohan takes the cake! I sum him up tersely in 'brick.' Kirk.

"Some of this sounds as if it isn't in earnest, and some as if it is. Wonder if you can pick out which is which, or if you will take the trouble. Try for the old times' sake. Thank you, dear, for all you've done for me consciously and without knowing it. K."

Thayer had hardly finished this characteristic epistle when the door was pushed softly open and Clodah's fair head peered through.

"May I come in?" she called childishly. "I feel like Clodah Rohan now." She stood before him in the simple gown she had worn on the day she left the island. "You asked me if I had it

with me still," she went on with a great reproach in her eyes. "Now, did you think that I would leave behind this gown you kissed me in?"

Thayer threw back his head and laughed in irrepressible mirth. Clodah stood in upright disapproval.

"Now, why do you laugh at me?" she said plaintively. "I am trying all ways I can to be English, and surely why should I not save this gown? Tell me why you laugh."

Thayer drew her down with gentle force on his knee. "I am only thinking," he said, "of what some girls I know would do for house-room if they kept all the gowns they had been kissed in." He paused, impelled thereto by Clodah's look of utter horror.

"Do you mean that more than one man kisses them?"

"I'm afraid so," he replied gravely.

"Did you ever—" she began quickly, and then, guided by some innate impulse that came just too late for her own good, she stopped.

"Heavenly Father!" murmured Thayer. He took her flushed face between his palms. "Clodah, what would you say if I told you I had

kissed one woman once, and that woman was Mrs. Davenport?"

Clodah flinched, but she rallied bravely.

"I should not like it with any one else, but—if you wanted to—with you—and her—why I should want to kiss her myself. No, I really should nae mind."

Thayer set her hurriedly on her feet.

"Well," he said, "as a reward of merit for bravery under fire I'll tell you this truth, that I never kissed Mrs. Davenport. Ah, you did care after all!" He pinched her cheek as a glad light shot into her eyes. "But you were brave all the same. Now for work."

For three hours he tried her in various ways and numberless poses, and with each trial his power grew surer and his delight greater. She had the artistic instinct within her to a sufficient degree to be able to catch an idea without words, and she seemed to grasp by intuition Thayer's oftentimes entirely incoherent directions. That morning accustomed her too to the fact that artists can not talk when they work, and that they are apt to forget people who are in the same room with them. Nothing of the

loneliness of the night before attacked her, and she laughed at herself, half ashamed for her yielding to such a foolish emotion. Every now and then Thayer would call her over to watch the progress he was making, and she would peer under his arm at the wonderful strokes which were making her live on the canvas. At noon he threw down his brushes.

"I've worked myself and you too hard this warm morning," he said with some faint reproach. "Come, we'll rake up some luncheon somewhere, and then we'll start out for an afternoon and night of it. There's nothing in this dirty city worth seeing, but convention demands that we spend good hours of our lives admiring what is not admirable. Don't trouble to change your gown for luncheon. I'm starved, and you ought to be if you're not."

So he carried her off down to the dining room, and then for an afternoon of sightseeing, and a night at the play.

For a week all the notes of Clodah's marriage symphony were high ones. If there was not harmony she did not miss it in the richness of the melody trilled about her. Already she had expanded in her whole nature under the forcing power of wedded life. Her face had begun to lose its perfect childishness; her manner had more in it, though still so little, of self-assertion. And yet, as Thayer had written Mrs. Davenport, her lovely innocence had survived. One of the great loves that come into some few lives in the span of a century had taken possession of her, and the purity of her passion had proved greater than the fever of it.

She had come to Thayer blindly, unreasoningly, only instinctively. She had married a stranger, and already she had set herself to work to study him a very little, with a yearning desire to learn to know him as well as she knew the heart of her father. She had already learned

that he was different from the silent, reserved men of Eilean Rohan, who lived their silent lives within themselves; different not only in his appearance and way of life, but in the manner of his thought and its resulting deed. He said things whose words she understood, but whose meaning was hidden. Sometimes he spoke lightly of what she had been taught were life's greatest mysteries, spoke of them as if they were no mysteries at all. She had been trained to regard life as a serious thing. Thayer made a jest of it, a jest that did not ring with true mirth. The religion of the islanders was not a complicated one in the sense that it involved much churchly machinery, but it was of very sturdy Scottish stock, and it did not find its nourishment in the sweetmeats of easy-going consciences. It was simple but severe. So far as she could discover, her husband had no religion, though she had not yet given up her gentle searchings.

At times, too, he sank into an abstraction which she could not understand. She tried bravely not to feel alone, yet her good sense told her that at such times he was as far away from her as if he were in another world. The somber

reveries were growing more frequent, too, and she wondered dimly what was hurting him, what she could do to help him. The seventh morning after her marriage she crept up to him as he sat moodily at the breakfast table, and laid her troubled little head on his shoulder. He did not repulse her, but his caress was perfunctory, a careless touch such as he might have bestowed on a stray dog; and then, oblivious of her, he sank into a frowning abstraction again. She stayed by him for some moments motionless, and then, feeling that her presence was unnoted and uncared for, she stole softly away.

The hours that followed made up her first black day. She did not try to seek Thayer again for some time, and when she did at last go in search of him she was met by Hughes, who told her that his master had left the house with no word as to his destination.

She ate her luncheon alone, that is, she sat down at the table, and Hughes placed dishes before her, and in a few moments removed them. That afternoon she spent in her room. She tried to write to her father, but the crushing sense of loneliness was too great for her to make her letter

cheerful, and she pushed the half-written sheet desperately away. Hughes came up at last to announce dinner, and it was only when she went downstairs into the dining-room that she saw Thayer again. He had come down in his velvet coat, with the odor of paints about him. As she came into the room he went over to her gaily.

"I feel ashamed of myself," he cried. "I didn't mean to leave you so long this morning, and then when I finally got started home it was in the company of an idea that drove me upstairs, where I've been working for five hours. Never mind, you can see it for a treat after dinner."

Clodah smiled at him, and refused to say she had been more than a little lonely, but there had been a mournful droop to her mouth, a puzzle of the eyes, and a corrugation of the brow that Thayer noted, and because of them had sworn softly to and at himself. He took Clodah and the evening papers up to the studio with him, showed her his work of the afternoon, and then became absorbed in the news sheets. Clodah stood by him for a few moments; then she went away from him over to a wide window

seat, and perched herself forlornly on it, looking like a solitary child. Thayer read through one paper and picked up another, but between the two he caught sight of her, and after that the desolate droop of her figure came between him and the printed page. He glanced through the headlines; then he inwardly braced himself for what he detested, a scene with a woman, and throwing the papers down he went over to the dim recess. Clodah looked up at him in timid welcoming, mixed with a deprecation that Thayer found rather irritating for a moment.

"What a brute I am!" he said to himself, as he felt his ire rise. "Am I already beginning to demand the wiles of a worldly creature from this child whose ignorance of her charms is her grace?"

He sat down beside her and gathered her comfortably into his arms.

"Tell me the truth," he said with a laugh in his voice that Clodah felt was directed against her, and yet did not resent. "You got up and left me all alone this evening to read my papers, and came over here all alone to this extremely

uncomfortable seat because—" he stopped short to laugh at her without any pretense of hiding his amusement; "because this morning I frankly forgot all about you. And to-night you have been sitting here wondering if I am tired of you, and for fear I am you have withdrawn yourself from my side, and as nearly as you could without sulking, which sin you will never in your very nature be guilty of, from my sight. You have been afraid I am tired of seeing you around, and that I wish you were an old cup or something of the sort that I could break or throw down in the street."

Clodah nestled back against him.

"I think you must be the Wizard man o' Gling-gling cave," she breathed in shame and fun commingled.

"The Wizard man of Gling-gling cave!" he echoed. "That doesn't sound nice, but a little later you shall tell me all about the strange gentleman for a punishment, for I intend to punish you for being naughty to-day." He paused and looked down at her with a short, harsh laugh.

"I don't know how to talk to you," he

said abruptly, "and yet I must for your own good. I don't want to make you unhappy, and yet I shall have to do it deliberately to avoid—perhaps—a greater sorrow for you. Look here, Clodah, I'm a strange man to most people. Don't think I'm trying to pose before you—but then you won't. God knows what made you come to me as you did. I never dreamed you would, at least with all this feeling for me that you have. I didn't have to use the charm of the snake, at any rate, thank Heaven, for you came to me like a dear maiden out of some old folk-lore, mine before I had tried to take you.

"But, look here, by and by you are going to be awfully hurt through me if you let yourself be. We're going to get down out of the clouds sooner or later, and I'm going to get down to work again, and when I'm busy, and sometimes when I'm not, I have very devils of moods, Clodah. Things you don't do and things you do do and every other thing on earth—it all seems to irritate me then past endurance. Then I say things, half of them I don't mean when I say them, but it gives me a savage sort of satisfaction to see other people wince. Hughes

down there, he worships me like a dog, and if I broke his head for him he'd come back to me soon as it was mended; but sometimes I get so sunk in the devils that I can't seem to rest content till I make his poor old lips quiver with pain. All this shocks you, even the hearing of it, and if I should ever forget myself and say something cruel to you—don't you see, Clodah, I'm throwing mud on myself now to warn you against a greater pain.

"Now this morning when you came up to me I was busy thinking, and the fact that you came up just then bothered me, but I thought I didn't show it. Honestly, I never knew when you went away, for I was trying to work out an idea that worried me then, and does yet for that matter, and—I didn't pay any attention to you. Now if you'll try to make yourself understand that one thing about me. Come to me whenever you want to; never hesitate to say or do anything to me. But if I frown or say things don't get hurt. That's the thing that aggravates me to the point of cruelty, not the fact that I'm interrupted so much as the feeling that somebody

is creeping about with lacerated feelings. Have I wounded you past redemption now?"

Clodah looked at him with clear, shining eyes.

"Now I feel more your wife than you have ever let me feel," she said softly. "Anything you ever tell me about yourself is a joy to me and not a hurt. I think I understand. When I used to be spinning at home and wanted to get a great deal done, and some one would come in and talk to me, even my feyther, it made me nervous and the thread would break, and I had to stop. I shall not be afraid of you and I shall not get hurt, is that what you want of me? If only I could almost know that you loved me all through!"

Thayer had smiled at the spinning experiences which had put her so thoroughly *en rapport* with the artistic temperament. At her last words he strained her close to him.

"I think you may—almost—know," he said, half wonderingly, and Clodah, laughing happily, did not know that his words were not a quotation.

"Well, that's all settled," he said at last, "and

we needn't ever again have to talk over my brutality. Now tell me about the Wizard man."

"It isn't much of a story," Clodah said shyly. "My feyther used to tell it me when I was a little girl."

"Never mind," said Thayer comfortably. "Little-girl stories aren't to be despised, and it sounds inviting, the Wizard man of Gling-gling cave. Besides, I want to know how I'm like him. Here, I pull you up like this, and you lie back here like this, and then you put your head like this, and then you tell me the story."

"Well," she began slowly and shyly, "once on a time there was a man so wonderful that all the people on Eilean Rohan, an' that was years an' years ago, got to calling him the Wizard man. An' then, because he lived all to himself in a cave on the shore over by Strathay Point, they got to calling him the Wizard man o' Gling-gling cave. An' he had a strange gift o' sight, an' he could tell everybody all they ever thought or did, no matter whether he was by or not. An' people grew afraid o' him an' his gift o' sight. Nobody could tell how he came by it, either, for once he'd been just the same as any

man about there except that he had queer fits o' musing, and he'd go off to the Isle o' the De'il that sits away out to sea and has a veil an' wrapping o' mist about it in storm or shine.

"Ah, many's the Rohan man that's ne'er come back from there when the cruel storms come an' dash the boats on the ragged reefs that hedge in the isle. An' 'tis whispered in our place that the bodies o' all that are lost in the North Sea find theirsel'es at last about the De'il's Isle." All unconsciously Clodah was speaking in the tongue of her people as she told the Rohan legend, and her eyes began to widen in their peculiar fashion as the atmosphere of the strange tale grew on her.

"Well, this man that wasna a Wizard yet, he'd go and stay on this isle that good men shunned, an' didna hold no priest, an' he longed to hae the power o' knowin' all men an' all things. An' the De'il told him that first he'd hae to know all sin an' do a dreadful deed. An' the man was a good man as men go, an' he didna want to gi' up his soul at first, for that was what he knew it 'ud come to, though the De'il spoke him fair an' said he didna want his soul; all he

wanted was to gi' him great pleasure. An' finally he said he'd know sin; an' he went to far places, an' he did all manner o' things that he didna dare confess, an' by an' by he got so he never went to a priest, an' he began to see the face o' Heaven was turned from him. An' then he got frightened, for he'd been a good man once, an' he hadna wanted to gi' up his soul for good, an' so he went in churches, an' the priests 'ud stop their prayers, an' the good people 'ud shrink from him, an' he was in sore despair. Then finally he was mad wi' all he'd done, an' he went back on the fastest ship he could get to the Isle o' the De'il. Then he tried to get rid o' his sin, an' the De'il laughed at him an' said that nacbody in Heaven or earth could take away the memory o' sin, an' that was all o' sin that mattered. An' wi' all the taunts and sneers the man grew wild, an' he said as long as he'd gone a part o' the road he'd go it all, an' he made ready to do the great sin the De'il told him he'd hae to do before he could read the secrets o' men's hearts.

"An' the sin was to get a young maid an' keep her in the cave, an' she must be wi'out sin an'

full o' piety, an' from the beating o' her heart he was to learn all that he longed to know. An' so he found a maid that was such a one,—'twas one he'd known from her childhood, the lass o' his dearest friend,—an' he took her away wi' him, an' no man knew where she'd gone. An' as time went on he grew harder an' crueler, an' he put her through strange tortures to get at the secrets he wanted to know, an' sometimes her moans 'ud sound straight across the sea, an' the sailors 'ud cross their breasts at the sad sound, an' no one knew what it meant an' all thought it was a portending wind. For she knew she was being used for sin, an' she was sore hurt, for her heart was wi' the love o' God. But she couldna help hersel'. An' his power grew till all men shrank from him in fear an' terror, for he could read their hearts as if their thoughts were printed out, an' he came to use his knowledge in an evil way. He set feyther against son, an' husband against wife, an' all the land was in great distress for the evil that was being wrought.

"An' then at last," the girl's eyes darkened and her voice was full of awe, "the people that

lived then, they got wrought up till at last they made an army of them all together, an' they went to the cave where he was dwelling. An' he was in the midst o' one o' his mysteries an' so close held that he didna use the sight he might hae used to tell him that his enemies were coming. An' so they were on him before he was aware. An' they found him wi' the maid. Then they knew it was her moans that had guided them, an' they thought all the time they were coming that it was the sighing o' a dreadful wind.

"An' when the maid saw her feyther an' brothers she knew the sign o' her release, but 'twas the release o' death. For God took the breath out o' her poor body right then and there. Then her feyther rushed on the Wizard to kill him, but the face o' him stopped the uplifted arm. For he was staring at the dead body o' the girl like a lost soul looks on a saved one. An' the feyther saw it was a greater punishing to let him live on wi' his regret. So they went away.

"An' some say one way an' some say another, but at any rate the Wizard man o' Gling-gling cave disappeared that night. Some say he went

to live wi' the De'il, that the De'il came an' dragged him away and said his soul belonged to him; an' others say that he flung himself into the raging o' the sea that night after he had tortured himself in penance for his crime. But never a priest could there be found who 'ud say a prayer for the repose o' his soul, an' ever since that time there's the sound o' moaning an' the cry o' a tortured soul in Gling-gling cave that didna die down in the death o' the maid."

Thayer had listened in a fever of fascination to the simple story so simply told, that held within it all the folk-wisdom that is beyond that of philosophies and creeds.

"Do you believe all that, Clodah?" he asked softly.

She stirred a little restlessly in his arms.

"I dinna think that I do believe it all," she said at length, "though there's many o' my people that do. But I believe there's a lesson in it like's in the parables o' Christ. My feyther showed it to me, an' I've thought on it many a time sitting on Red Rock when the sea was roaring an' the strange sounds that come across the water were sounding in my ears."

"What is the teaching?" Thayer asked.

"I dinna need to tell you that," she replied simply with an accent that told her adoring thought.

"Tell me," Thayer persisted gently.

"My feyther showed it to me, that whether there was truth or legend in the tale, there was a lesson for every one that heard it, that too much thinking on evil things leads one to evil deeds, an' that no man is strong enough to stand before evil to learn it, for he has to take some o' it into his heart. An' that evil desire leads him to take others into sin an' shame, an' that there's no thing on earth to be desired good enough to need the sacrifice o' a living soul."

Her eyes had long since turned from the window embrasure and had fastened themselves on something tall and black and grinning at the far end of the great long room. She sat upright with an excited laugh; then she sprang swiftly out of Thayer's grasp and ran down the length of the studio. When Thayer reached her she was crouching with a half scared look in her eyes at the foot of the black marble pillar.

"Isna 't queer!" she cried excitedly. "All the

time I was telling the story I was staring into the face o' that thing up there." She pointed to the heavy carving that crowned the top. "It was smiling like the Wizard man o' Gling-gling cave. Some queer way when I come in here, or get to telling you my silly tales I look on it while I'm speaking. Isna things queer!"

Thayer did not smile the sarcastic smile that had come to his lips a few evenings before when the girl had spoken almost the same words. His hands clenched themselves nervously, and a heavy frown spread over his face. Then he bent down and lifted her up.

"Yes," he said with a curious regret, "things are queer. Don't talk about it any more."

When Mrs. Davenport received Thayer's singular and unconventional announcement of his marriage she experienced an hour of still, cold rage. That some audacious recklessness had flashed into his mind on that last afternoon of theirs together she had well known; but that the desire would spend itself, or failing that, that the islanders would keep their own, she had not held the faintest doubt. That Thayer's desire was so deep-seated as to induce him to contract a marriage solely for the purpose of obtaining a suitable model she had never dreamed, and would never have believed without the evidence of his madness there before her. In all her premonitions and fears of disaster that she carried with her from England, marriage was something she had not counted upon.

She blamed herself furiously, needlessly, for

everything that had happened. Her husband had been that people's guest, had lived with them, and had loved them. By his heroic rescue of The Rohan's son he had brought upon the simple people a debt of gratitude and hospitality to him and his that generations would not wipe out.

Then she had come along, she, the wife of the man they revered, and she had made up her wilful mind that, being weary of all that England and the continent had to offer her, she would take a yachting tour on the North Sea, and would incidentally touch upon that strange shore concerning which she had been more or less curious ever since her husband's return with his tales of its silent people, its uncrowned king. So she had carried out her plans, and she had brought with her, besides a number of insignificant creatures, a man whose dangerous personality was sufficient to wreck cities did he so choose to exert it. She had deliberately brought him there, had dared to let him walk and talk with the daughter of the man whom her husband honored above all men he had known.

And, as if this were not enough to urge on

crime and sorrow—surely Fate is more powerful than humanity! that the child should look like her; that Thayer should have dared to ask of her friendship what he had; that she should have reminded him, innocently, to be sure, but none the less clearly, of what had completely slipped his mind, of that island and that summer day; that he should have been seized with some madness of the gods which resulted in this crime!

She flung the letter from her and began to pace up and down her room. What should she do? Everything! What could she do? Nothing! The English law provided in entirety for matrimonial possession. The child, the innocent child! In spite of her anger something at last of the respect he had foretold began to rise within her for his ability, his power of execution. How had he compassed it,—not the gaining of the girl's consent, that was only too easily understood, but the winning of the father? She recalled The Rohan as he had appeared, standing between Thayer and his daughter at the moment of their departure for their boat, and her amazement grew over the fact that, according to Thayer, it was with her father's

consent Clodah had wedded him and had gone away.

She did not write to Thayer for a week. When she finally made herself go to her writing desk for that specific purpose, she began her letter as abruptly as the man had done.

"I send my felicitations to you, my friend. To Mrs. Thayer—my sympathy. Pray do not deliver the message, but keep it to yourself and for yourself. Remember it the first time she vexes you, as she surely will, if she has not done so already, by her simplicity. It will not be her fault that she displeases you, and if you let her see she has done so she will not see the reason why for so fearful a sin, and she will—sin again. My dear Kirk, you will perceive I am not trying to make the best of this marriage. You need a *mondaine*—to be strictly accurate, you need no one—but if marriage has an attraction so great for you that you can not resist it, you need the most finished production of an artificial age, an orchid in rearing and culture. And with the unwisdom of a child you have reached out your hand for a mountain daisy, merely because your

eyes were weary with trying to follow the strangenesses and the hybrid growths of the flower of the air and the hot-house. You will find that the daisy is easily traced out, that there are no complexities in its structure, that its color is white,—a color which dazzles, but which one enjoys only so long as its whiteness is perfect. When the first smirch comes, and remember it comes from without, and when the first petal is bent or broken, one grows weary of what is simple to weariness and no longer perfect, and desires to toss it away. And so long as it is a daisy I have no fault to find. I have trodden on the flowers of the field myself. But a human soul I feel tender for, and I confess to you, my dear friend, I am consumed with a great fear for her and for you. Do not soil her whiteness any more than the fearful laws of our world seem to require. Do not—I realize this is an unwise letter. I do not think you will be angry with me for it, but it will not help you, nor will it help you to help her. It is in effect and meaning an "I told you so" before the act. After the tragedy occurs I shall never say it. But I shall perish with the regret of my own share

in this if I do not say it now. Give Clodah all the love from me she wishes and cares for, and say to her I am always her friend. As I am yours."

It was some two weeks after his marriage that Thayer received this letter whose unwisdom was clear and frankly confessed. He frowned over it and flung it away, and then picked it up and read it again and laughed. And the frown and the laugh alike were unpleasant and unhealthful.

" 'The tragedy,' " he mused with a sneer about his mouth. His eyes grew dark, and he stared unseeingly out of the window. Suddenly he flung up his head.

"I have her face before me constantly. My fingers tingle to get to work. I have waited patiently all these days. It is the tidal moment. And she has to yield."

He stood for another moment in silence. Then he shook his shoulders vigorously and went rapidly from the room.

After that one serious talk of theirs in the studio that night,—the only serious conversation Thayer had ever had with her,—Clodah began to realize as never before what an utter stranger her husband was to her, and to yearn with what was at times almost hopelessness after a greater and more satisfying knowledge of him and all that pertained to him. She began to study his moods. It was a pitiful attempt at first, pitiful in its utter lack of method, but nevertheless productive of some good.

Already she had learned to recognize several distinct harbingers of moods whose appearance meant to her a quiet effacing of herself till the spell had worn itself out. She reassured herself with desperate cheerfulness by recalling that he had told her that night always to remember he never meant to hurt her, and she tried to go happily about her self-imposed household tasks during her periods of voluntary banish-

ment. She busied herself about her fast increasing wardrobe, a care that had as yet been delegated to no maid. She tried new ways of doing her hair, since she had learned her hair was Thayer's pride, and in this she was aided by a mysterious man with all sorts of ointments and unguents and instruments at his command, under whose fostering care her tresses had begun to take on a sheen and shimmer unknown to them before. She was naturally a busy little body, and by great diligence she managed to thrust aside much of the loneliness she could not help but feel.

Hughes was a great aid to her. Any mention of Thayer was to him as the smell of powder to the nostrils of a war horse, and when he was once for all assured that his new mistress not only permitted it but was delighted to hear any and every detail relating to the master whom he loved, Hughes promptly abdicated the footsteps of the single throne he had long since erected to Thayer, and proceeded to put together hastily another royal chair wherein he might in his mind's eye see Clodah sitting. All the details of Thayer's babyhood he knew,

all his boyish pranks. In one quite criminal one he confessed to having assisted. Therefore Hughes, sometimes unconsciously, sometimes with the cunning of a Machiavelli, was of infinite help in giving her data whereby she might better, though still dimly, understand the inner life of the man they both worshiped.

During the week that followed the night of the studio talk Thayer's abstraction and moodiness grew on him. He treated Clodah with kindness, but she felt that for the time being she was put with absent gentleness quite out of his life.

The morning that Mrs. Davenport's letter came Thayer entered the breakfast room with a heavy shade on his brow. He swallowed his coffee mechanically, said no word to any one, and left his remaining letters, and even the morning papers, untouched. Within the shortest time possible for the despatching of a frugal meal he breakfasted, and then made instant escape to the studio. In her loneliness Clodah wandered down through the kitchen and in aimless fashion out to a little back balcony, where she found Hughes busy with some boots of hers and Thayer's. He

rose as he saw her coming, but she motioned him to his work, and perched herself on a window ledge near by.

"It's a fine mornin', ma'am," ventured Hughes at length.

"Yes," Clodah assented cheerfully. "That's why I came out here to get some fresh air. I think Mr. Thayer wants to work or something, too."

"Yes, ma'am," said Hughes promptly. "He looked just that way while he was eatin' nothin' at all."

"Can you tell that easily, Hughes?" Clodah asked with wistfulness and admiration mingled.

Hughes' ear was not of Grecian mold, but it had a fine faculty for the hearing of things hidden, and he caught all that lurked in the young wife's tone, and guessed at much more.

"Why, Lord bless you, ma'am," he said sympathetically, dropping the little walking shoe of hers he was at work on. "You see I've known Master Kirk from the time he could just hold up his head, and before, and if I couldn't tell when his torments come on him, who could?"

"Torments!" repeated Clodah wonderingly.

Hughes gave up for the time being all pretense of going on with his rightful duties.

"That's the name for what he has," he said firmly. "Most generally I've noted they come on him when he's hard-worked and don't want to be worried, because he's worried enough as it is. Then if things that he does in that room of his come out right he comes out the same way. Sometimes he can't seem to get suited, though, and after he's tried and tried till he's clear wore out, then he seems to get cruel like and don't care what he says or does. I talked with a doctor once about him, ma'am, once when he was awful sick of a fever, and the doctor and me had quite a comfortable talk. He found out I wasn't tryin' to pry, but that I wanted to find out things so as to know what ailed Master Kirk at times.

"As near as I could make out, ma'am," Hughes leaned forward and spoke in a deprecating way, as if to ward off any ill results of his plain speaking, "though I don't believe it as it sounds myself and told the doctor so, he seemed to hang on to it in quite a positive way that Master Kirk was mad. Now don't look so wilty,

ma'am, for he went on to say there wasn't no great genius that ever lived that wasn't in a way insane, and that when they was hard at work, under the spur of a great thought, he put it, they wasn't responsible for anything,—fire, murder, or sudden death." Hughes rolled his last phrase over with a decided relish.

"But, Hughes," Clodah cried indignantly, "mad people are dangerous, and—"

"It's this way, ma'am," Hughes explained soothingly. "Maybe you ain't noted it yet, for anybody with half an eye to look with can see how he's that took up with you that he ain't got time for any of his paint-pots now, but it's bound to come sooner or later, for he's that wrapped up in painting, too. And just as he's got all eyes an' ears for you now, he'll have a mind for nothin' on earth but them paints and brushes when he once gets fairly started to goin' again. You see, ma'am," Hughes' voice became quite tender and protecting, "they ain't a doubt but Master Kirk's a wonderful genius, anybody with an eye for paints can see that, and that was what the doctor said, that genius was just off of insanity. He showed it me this way.

"Everybody's got queer quirks in their brains. Some likes the sea and some don't, and some wants this and some wants that, and if all them different tastes ain't controlled they get to be hobbies, and the folks with 'em is called queer. But with some people, and they ain't many of 'em, their tastes is wonderful, like Master Kirk's for making pictures. 'Them's the tastes,' the doctor said, 'that ought to be encouraged, the feelin' for poetry an' paintin' an' actin' an' all them sort.' He said that instead of these people bein' cranks they was geniuses, and the reason was because they had given something that was in them out to the world and made it better rather than all their friends unhappy with their fads for nothin'."

"And that's what he does, Hughes," said Clodah earnestly.

Hughes took up the neglected shoe. "To be sure he does," he said heartily. "They tell me that all over London people know him, an' all the continent. The biggest men in the kingdom have been here and he with them, and wherever

he was or whoever was with him he was the best of 'em all, ma'am."

Clodah's eyes shone. Then her face grew serious. She bent forward. "Hughes," she murmured, "tell me how you act when he gets to thinking so hard. I never want to bother him, you know, and of course I understand he can't be thinking of me all the time."

Hughes laid the poor shoe down once more, and stared off into space with a somewhat puzzled face. "I don't know how to tell you to act, ma'am, for he may be different with you in what he says and does. Far as I am concerned I go along and don't pay not a drop of attention to anything about him. That is, I don't let him see I do. When I get his breakfast, if he's in one of them spells, I see to it there's a pile of bread ready cut and waiting. You see if it's dry toast I bring in to him he'll invariably want it wet, and if it's wet toast he can't eat no slop, and whether it's buttered or unbuttered don't make a mite of difference to him, for whichever it isn't that's what he wants. You see, ma'am, I don't try to please him, but I just get things

ready to set to work to get him what he wants just as soon as he sees what he don't want. Sometimes that's all there is to it, and he'll just sit there and not eat anything, and stare off with an ache in his eyes and heart that puts a worse one in mine. It's most worse when he's silent than when he rages.

"Sometimes he does say awful things. Sometimes he turns on me and talks against me and laughs at me and my ignorance, and all the time above the sneers and the dreadful laugh I can see the everlastin' ache in his eyes, and I know that he's more miserable than he could ever make me, no matter what he says tryin' to. Sometimes that goes on for days and nights, and all I can do is to watch over him and somehow get him to eat something or other, and take care of him till the evil temper works out.

"The doctor told me it wasn't a devil in him, ma'am. That had been what I'd thought it was before. He said that people like him could see clear into the wonders o' things that ain't on earth, and that too often when their clearest sight came, and they saw everything that was lovely, and then had to find out that the best they

could do was so everlastin' short, they got clear maddened with the failure that nobody else could see, and that makes them do what they do."

"And can you always keep from showing you are hurt, Hughes?" she asked wistfully.

"Always try to, ma'am," said Hughes cheerfully, "for I know he doesn't mean it at all. Why, ma'am, after a spell's wore itself out and he's through with the fever for a while, I can always tell it by the way he comes out to me. 'Get me some dinner to-night,' he'll say. 'Dinner for two, Hughes. I'm that hungry I could eat you.' 'All right, sir,' I'll say cheerful as I can, and without takin' no notice of anything. And then more often than not he'll come over to me and put his arm round my shoulders, and give me a little shake or something, and he'll say, 'Well, Hughes,' and look at me with his eyes that look hollow and burned out with all their sparkle, and then's the time I'm apt to make a fool of myself, ma'am. He always goes off laughin' then and says somethin' back over his shoulder, and I tend to my work and praise God that it's over and well over for another time.

"You see," he added softly after a pause that

had lasted well into the minutes, "it takes people that care for him and love him better than themselves to be about him. There's things that's hard, that is they might be if any one didn't care for him, but there's that about him and it that pays. You see," he broke off, fearful through his knowledge of his hidden thought that he had said too much to the wife of his master, "I knew him when he was a tiny babe, and—"

Clodah had been looking off into the blue of the sky with a rapt look in her eyes that had awed the man before her. His last sentence brought her back to him. She laughed suddenly, gleefully.

"Was he a nice little baby, Hughes?"

"That he was, ma'am," Hughes replied earnestly. "He was that big for his age, and the bonniest eyes and curls, and strong—why, ma'am, when he was only four weeks old they'd laid him down on his little stummick and he didn't want to lay there, and instead of cryin' like an ordinary child he raised himself up on his little hands and looked about him with his head and shoulders straight up in the air for all the world like an old mud turtle!" Hughes

bent backward and forward in mirth, and Clodah's laugh rang out.

"It seems too funny, Hughes, to think of him being a little baby. Tell me some more."

Hughes had just made ready to take an inventory of his stock of reminiscences, when a shadow from the open window fell on them both.

"Are you here, Clodah?" Thayer asked quickly. "Do you want to help me some this morning?" She scrambled quickly to her feet.

"Is it a picture you're painting?" she asked. "Is it me standing by the boat?"

"No," with the same quick imperiousness. "It's another one."

He lifted her bodily through the window, and Hughes watched them disappear in the darkness of the hallway. A shadow from its gloom seemed to fall on him as he sat in the sunshine and rubbed away at his homely work.

"It's on him again," he murmured to himself. "I can see it in his eye and hear it in his voice. He's nervous and wore out with the workin' of it in him, and now it's comin' out, and God help the child that's his wife."

But Clodah, all unseeing, was running gaily along the corridor.

"Shall I put on my red frock?" she called as she reached her room.

Thayer caught up with her.

"No," he said, softly, "it is another thing entirely, and you will do what I ask, Clodah? On your bed you will find that long cloak that came home the other day. I want you to wrap yourself in that—and nothing more—and come up to the studio as soon as you can."

There was a silence, at first of incomprehension, then of slow-dawning intelligence. He looked into her eyes and the flash of superb resentment and white-heat anger there made a swift fury leap to life within him. Was the great impulse to work to be denied now after he had waited so long and so patiently, after he had sacrificed so much? The very fire and flame of a creative god was burning fiercely within him and refused to be smothered again and still revive. If it was crushed out now it would go forever. Then his fury died down. He must consider the child before him if he was to gain his end without brutality, and brutality

was not pleasant to Thayer in all its naked ugliness.

"You don't understand me," he said quietly. "That is, you understand at once too little and too much. Come in here with me for a moment, and let me tell you, dear, how you can help me now as never before in all your life. Come, Clodah."

Within half an hour Thayer was back in the studio. He walked restlessly about moving all sorts of properties hither and thither. A large canvas stood in front of a model's platform, which had been pushed up beneath the curiously carved pillar that reared itself against a brilliant background of red and gold stuffs. The pillar was of black marble, Corinthian in design, but topped with a hideously real head of a grinning satyr. Thayer had run across the thing on the continent some years before, and had promptly taken the chance of purchase.

At last he stopped his restless strides with a suddenness that was ominous. He was growing weary, tired of waiting. He took up some brushes and made a few strokes on the canvas that were far from aimless despite the distraught condition of his mind. Then he put them down and looked almost savagely at the door. Surely

she had had time enough. He took a moment or two to wonder to himself at the comparative ease of his victory. He had put off the crucial moment for several days because he feared, above all things, a tumultuous scene, and of all things natural or made by art Thayer loathed hysterics in a woman. He took another moment to congratulate himself on holding that vicious temper of his in check at a time when it threatened to rise and swell beyond all lawful bounds.

It was too exasperating, when he was so strongly in the mood for work, immediate work, that she could not have understood, have comprehended without the need of explanation. He rather marveled at himself when he remembered how gentle he had been with her. He had appealed to her love for him. He had laid great and sincere stress on the fact that she could give him now for his darling creation a sort of help no other woman who could would bestow. He told her of the thrilling inspiration she was to him, and he merged the seriousness of his first appeal into a half laughing mirth at her strange sensitiveness. He had been surprised beyond the ordinary when she had suddenly and with her

face still hidden from him thrown her arms about his neck.

"I hae tried to understan' things ever since I came away wi' you," she had murmured breathlessly, "an' the things I canna understan' I try to be content to leave be till I grow wiser."

Then she had gone swiftly over to her dressing table, her face very pale and her eyes full of a shrinking terror, and he, well knowing the victory was his, had gone quietly from the room. He felt a sort of passing pity for her evident suffering, but the emotion was only momentary. Beneath all the really tender feeling he had for The Rohan's daughter lay his passionate desire to use the flaming moment regardless of what tender spirit this fierce desire scorched and blackened.

Suddenly the door behind him clicked sharply. He started and wheeled swiftly about. Clodah had entered and was closing the door behind her. For one long moment she stood still and rigid as if the power to move were no longer in her. A long rose-colored cloak fell in rich folds about her. The wide, drooping sleeves swept almost to the floor. Beneath the lace ruffles her little

hands gripped the heavy brocade with a wild tension she did not know.

Suddenly her eyes fell on the platform, on the pillar, on the grinning satyr's head. She closed them involuntarily against the sight of the carved figure which from the first had affected her so strangely. Not so quickly but that she realized the familiar stand was rolled just beneath it. Her eyes opened again, widening with a horror that was sickening. Then she drew a sharp little breath, and as if it had quickened her, with her face white and set, her bright hair flowing free as Thayer had told her to leave it, and the gorgeous brocade making a brightness about her path, she moved quickly and with a distinct dignity down the room and stepped lightly on the platform.

From the first Thayer had been watching her with an admiration that was almost awe. For the first time there came to him a dawning realization of the love she bore him, a love which might endure death and that which passed the pangs of death. As she turned and faced him he saw her eyes glance quickly from his face to the door beyond him. With an intuitive knowl-

edge of what had brought the hunted look into them, he went over to the door and drew the bolts fast. When he turned to her again the long cloak was lying in rosy ripples on the floor about her feet.

For two weeks Thayer worked daily on his painting. Every morning after breakfast he would go up to the studio, where Clodah would shortly follow him, and he would work feverishly till some latent spirit of humanity that stayed by him in all his excitement made him remember his little model and her exceeding weariness. Then for a few moments she would descend from her place and, wrapped in her cloak, would come over to the canvas and look in puzzled wonder wherein was blended a little pain at the painting which she could fairly see grow from day to day. After the first few days of her new modelship she lost the terror, much of the pain, and a little of the shyness that made her first poses a torture to her. Thayer taught her a few simple exercises whereby she might relieve her muscles from the cramp of their hard, distorted pose, and she would go through with them at her rest periods with an earnestness and

singleness of purpose that mightily amused him, though he carefully concealed it from her.

Clodah puzzled greatly over the composition of the painting wherein she figured. In the unfinished background was a half-circle of seats filled with a mass of queerly draped people. In the center of the half-circle was a box gorgeously draped in red and gold. It was raised from the arena beneath it by a series of pillars, black, and with carved heads like the one in Thayer's studio. At some distance from the box stood a row of similar pillars. These held the foreground, and to one of them she was bound by heavy chains. On her right and left stood a group of soldiers with massive shields and lances. One of them, the only figure that approached completion, held aloft a winning die and was turning with outstretched hand toward the girl. This was all she read in the confusion of sketch and color tests, and she wondered at its meaning and the story that it held.

"Do you like it?" Thayer asked her one morning as she was standing before it during a resting time.

She looked up at him doubtfully. "I don't

know," she confessed honestly. "I don't understand what it means. I think it's awful she should be there—so. I don't know what it means."

Thayer laughed. "Did you never hear of Nero, Clodah?"

She shook her head sadly. "I've told you I be not learned," she said wistfully.

He touched her cheek lightly. "Did you ever see a learned woman, Clodah?"

She shook her head again with a deep regret that sent Thayer off into a fresh laugh.

"You shouldn't miss the sight," he said teasingly. "I'll show you one sometime, and then you'll realize what you've been missing all your life—and hate me ever after."

It was one of his many speeches that she did not understand, and she only shook her head all to herself. At last she allowed herself a question.

"Isn't Mrs. Davenport a learned woman?"

"Oh," returned Thayer carelessly, "she's an altogether different sort, you know. Yes, she's learned; that is, she knows a lot here and there, but she's not a type of your blue-stocking."

"Blue stocking!" Clodah wrinkled up her forehead in a vain endeavor to catch the meaning of that term, but Thayer did not help her, and after giving up the word as another mystery she turned again to the painting.

"Who was Nero?" she ventured.

Thayer had gone off into a brown study, but her question roused him.

"Nero?" he repeated. "Oh, he was a bad sort all around. He was a Roman king, you know, and he was on deck when the early Christians began to make themselves known." Thayer stopped to laugh, wholly to himself. A wild caprice swayed him, and he let a whimsical fancy lead him recklessly on. "Their religion was a new one, then, you see—one which displeased some Roman gentlemen, and bored others, and made others smile. Now in the course of human events and Nero's actions it became necessary for that gentleman to put the blame for a number of things that had been going wrong on to somebody's shoulders, and when the apprehension that he was going to be the mark for the lightning became a well founded one, he decided to take the essence of some modern pu-

gilistic advice, and made up his mind to hit first and hit hard. In consequence he told all his friends and subjects that the Christians were the ones who had been cutting up the recent didoes, and that if the state of Rome wanted to stay present much longer the disturbing element had better be removed. Then he found he'd have to go further than he'd reckoned on to save his skin, but he was dead grit to the last, so he got up a lot of games and things, and began putting Christians to death. He built this"—Thayer swept a brush about the semi-circle in the background—"and got a lot of wild animals caged up there, and turned them loose down here, and drove the Christians out here in herds, and let the wild things tear them up."

Clodah looked horrified. "But what's that?" she breathed.

Thayer smiled a little grimly. "You want the point, do you? Well, by and by Nero found out the Christians wouldn't fight the animals, and simply because of religious scruples let themselves be chewed up. So he decided that if they didn't mind being slaughtered to make a Roman holiday, he would give some of

them something that they would mind. And this is one thing," he finished abruptly.

Clodah looked at the pictured scene with great shrinking, while Thayer looked at her with a queer gleam in his eyes. Suddenly she glanced up at him with a warm flush on her face, but a brave question in her eyes.

"Ask it," he said, large encouragement in his tone.

"I was just thinking," she said slowly, "—of course I can't tell things when they're right or wrong, things like this—but it seems so dreadful to paint out things that hurt a body so to look at." She put her hands to her heart with a simple little gesture. "It must 'a been awful for her," she breathed.

Thayer, watching her closely with all the fascination that all unwitting she was able to throw at times about him, saw that she caught but a small part of the awfulness, and for a moment he was almost impelled to thrust Nero's cruelty before her in all its exquisite refinement. It was an impulse pushed away as soon as it came to him, but he looked at her with the thought in his eyes, imagining how hers would

widen with the horror of a revelation whose faintest breath he well knew had not yet come to her.

"Well," he said, answering the first part of her question, "it all depends on how I do it up,—carry out the idea and all that. If I can make her face express what I want it to express, the end will justify the conception—and the means," he added slowly, defiantly. "Come," he went on after an instant of silence, "scamper up there, and get your pose for just a half-hour's work."

So Clodah stood dreamily for half an hour, her head full of the tale she had just heard, trying to imagine a man cruel enough to do what she had caught from Thayer's rendition this Roman king had done. She had to give it up, for her experience did not hold for her any standard whereby she might judge him. But with the thought of the Christian maiden and her sufferings her face grew so full of pain and woe that it paled in sympathy. For that agony of shame, that torture of the spirit, she had a rule whereby to measure, even though her tiny meter must be multiplied exceeding many times.

Thayer, glancing toward her once with one of his quick looks, caught the expression on her face, and all unseen by her drank it in.

"If I can but bring that atmosphere about her when I am ready for it," he said to himself, "I can never regret my enforced change of models. Is there anything on earth that could bring such a look to Hilda's face?" And he painted rapidly with a smile on his face and a perfect satisfaction in his heart. When noon came he swung Clodah down and kissed her warmly.

"You are perfect!" he said gladly as he wound her draperies closely about her. "You are going to make for me what I feel within me is going to be the great success of my life. Without you I could not have accomplished it."

And as they went downstairs together Clodah was content.

Over in Russia Hilda Davenport was deliberately worrying. Some shadow hung over her, some prescience of coming trouble. This whole affair of Thayer's marriage was so sudden and swift that she had been unable to plot out cause and effect in her mind with any degree of reasonable clearness. She detested making a move in the dark. She had a clear, far-seeing vision, and she wanted an uninterrupted view before advancing a step on any path.

Some things about this iniquitous marriage she had understood. She knew Thayer as he did not know himself. She knew beyond any further need of seeing it the girl's beautiful simplicity, her utter sincerity. She knew that love to such a nature whose whole enveloping environment had been single-stranded would mean heaven or the blackest hell. When she thought of the taking of that simple soul into all the complexities of Thayer's life, with all the strength of her

brain and heart she revolted at the heartless cruelty of it. What could come of it but disaster and woe?

Thayer and Clodah she could read, and, reading, she trembled for the fate of the girl. But The Rohan,—there lay the exceeding mystery. How had it come, she asked herself, her walls, her belongings day after day; how had it come that The Rohan could yield up his daughter in marriage to a man unknown to him, a man whom at first glance he had instinctively disliked? If the marriage had but been delayed; if Thayer had been put on probation; if after a fitting time had elapsed he had returned for the girl—Hilda smiled skeptically at that possibility—then she would have been able to explain an unwilling consent on The Rohan's part for the sake of the girl's happiness.

But a courting, a winning, a bearing away, all in the space of forty-eight hours, took her breath away when she tried to imagine such a proceeding in connection with the three principals in the present transaction. She could have persuaded herself that she misjudged the old islander, had she not rested her opinion of him on one that

she held higher; and she fortified herself against injustice to The Rohan by her husband's judgment of him.

Hilda Davenport and her husband and her married life were subjects that through two London seasons had been thoroughly discussed by the people of her world. She was a woman of intense personality, of decided tastes, possessed of the energy and means to gratify them, and she was filled with an indifference that was sublime for all the floating interest and inquisitiveness that surrounded her. She cared not a jot nor tittle for any opinion concerning her or her actions other than her own personal one, and wherever she went she left the clear conviction in the minds of all who met her that she was a woman who held herself absolutely untrammeled by the world and its conventions.

Her social position was incontestible, for her social sponsors were beyond reproach and were unaffected by the hum of comment she aroused. Further than this society knew nothing regarding her.

Nothing was volunteered concerning the absent Mr. Davenport, though the fact that he

lived was established beyond a doubt by his wife's unconcerned manner of referring to him. Indeed, several virtuous matrons of Vanity Fair had felt themselves insulted by her entirely too free and easy references to the absent one. Mrs. Davenport never hesitated to speak of him whenever she so desired, and she frequently disposed of disputed questions with an air that admitted of no further parley by appointing without vote Mr. Davenport to the position of umpire. It was really interesting to watch her naïve way of quoting her husband. When she chose to end a discussion she always accomplished the matter to perfection by murmuring something about "Mr. Davenport always says—" and there was a conscious and hurried change of subject.

Thayer grew to delight in her skill, and often commented on the perfection of manner with which she was wont to introduce into her prying circle the mention of a man, of whom he, to do her all justice, knew quite as little as the rest of her world. Hilda never discussed her marriage with any one, even her devoted friends,

and Thayer was left uninformed along with the rest.

"How you do manage to stimulate curiosity about the great unknown!" he said to her one day early in their friendship. "It is too amusing to watch these old grannies prick up their ears at the first word relating to the man they would rather see than any prince of the blood. And when you get through, though you have spoken in a manner utterly frank, you have told us—nothing." And Hilda did not melt under the half invitation to confidence which he so cleverly held out.

But despite rumor and innuendo, Mrs. Davenport pursued the even tenor of her way. She gained without seeking it the favor of prince and duke. Her friendship with Thayer continued and grew in intimacy, and for two years she had held a high place in the London world.

The mystery of her marriage was more made than existent. Hilda Davenport was really and honestly in love with her husband, a fact which Thayer discovered early in his acquaintance with her, and which he kept for her locked safely in his breast.

WHAT MANNER OF MAN

Harold Davenport was what in this age might be termed a private scientist. His love for the life sciences had developed at an early age, and he had had every chance for study and extended research. He was a New Yorker, graduated from Columbia College, and afterward a student at Munich and Leipsic. He had received several flattering offers of lectureships in prominent universities, but he had been firm in refusing them all. He had the love for constant study, but not under the driving necessity of compulsion. Then he had early made up his mind to keep alive all his vital desires and interests in life, and rightly or wrongly he regarded scholastic life as fatal in its tendencies to the preservation of vitality. He had no desire to be a Wagner delving among the iotas and digammas of indecipherable manuscripts in a vain endeavor to establish a system of limited phonetics, nor did he wish to carry into his independent researches any such spirit.

When he was thirty years of age he met Hilda Willoughby, and the sympathy between them was instantaneous. She was then nearly twenty-five years old, and had in her all the qualities

which her later life ripened so gorgeously. Much to his surprise and much to hers, their marriage was a thing accomplished almost before either one had decided to yield single life with its undeniable blessings. Yet the marriage proved a strangely happy one. Davenport was a man who, perhaps, had never done an unconventional thing in his life. His wife had knowingly never obeyed a social law. Yet the spirit of tolerance was so generous in them both that their outer actions were but differing expressions of the same conviction of personal freedom.

Never in the five years of their married life had Davenport raised an objection, nor to do him full justice felt it, to anything his wife might desire to do. Each had had, since their marriage rites, a share of personal freedom unfortunately too rare between husband and wife. Perhaps the secret of their perfect harmony lay here, that each realized that marriage which is not vitalized by a sense of unhampered liberty is deadened, dragged down to the earth by its own weight of chains. At all events neither had in thought or word ever attempted to restrain the

other, and their union had been an ideally happy one.

Then after five years of it a great longing came upon Davenport to join a party of French and German savants who were going down into the southern seas to study the marine life of those waters at first hand. The trip was to be from one and one-half to two years in duration, and a woman's presence could not be tolerated. The German *frau* and the French *madame* were to remain behind without a question. What then of the American wife?

Hilda swiftly disposed of the question. That Davenport's heart was bound up in this quest she did not doubt. That her presence was an impossibility she was keen enough to see. That she did not wish to have the qualifying word "uxorious" forced on her husband she was convinced. So within five minutes after he had frankly told her of the opportunity for him, and had asked her to consider the question for them both, her quick-moving mind was made up, and her life for two years was planned out.

"I have always wanted to have a good long try at London life," she said to him. "Don't

ask me why, my dear boy, for it is the acme of outward prudery, but here's my chance. Of course I can't go with you. Frankly I don't know that I should go if I could. Nature in all her stretch of space is delightful for a little while, but, dear me, two years of it! However, you must go, and I'll write to-night to the Frères and tell them I'm going to be bereaved for two years, and that it is far from my purpose to put on weeds! They are all I need to give me the open sesame to St. James; and Mrs. Davenport, I promise you, shall be the rage of the coming season."

So Davenport sailed after a farewell from his wife that never wavered in its smile, and she went back to the home that made her ache through and through with loneliness, and packed up her things, and departed in haste for England.

Her prophecy had been fulfilled, and she became, without much effort on her part, the London rage. Her remarkable beauty, her wonderful gowns, her superb assurance and her subtile charm altogether floated her to the top wave of the season's favorites. That triumph

was now past history, but it had not waned with the opening of the next society year.

She was in Russia now, the guest of the American ambassador and his wife. From the moment of her arrival she had resolutely put Thayer in the background. When his letter announcing the mad deed had come, she partially consoled herself in the extremely unwise letter she sent him.

For four weeks longer she threw herself with all her might into the gaieties about her. Then suddenly a message was forwarded to her from her London bankers. The savants' ship had returned five months ahead of time. Her husband was in Liverpool. Her visit in Russia was nearing its close. She promptly canceled two engagements immediately ahead, and one day later left for London.

Once upon the road, she let the lurking ghost of a month past walk freely. A queer telepathic sensation that had come to her often before under widely different circumstances descended upon her with maddening force. A wild impatience to be in London, to see Thayer, to see Clodah, made her chafe at every stop of the eminently

safe train upon which she traveled. To be there, to be anywhere where there was a chance of doing what might require execution!

All through the long, tiresome journey the mad unrest held her. When she reached London in the middle of one afternoon her telepathic impression that something was happening in the Thayer *ménage* had become a monomania. When she stood on the station platform and saw that Davenport had not met her she immediately concluded that he had not reached the city himself, for she had sent her train and its hour of arrival to his hotel address. Following out the line of action that was the only natural thing for her to do with all her recent perturbation on the all-engrossing subject, she took a cab and gave the man Thayer's address.

During the swift journey she leaned back with her impatience growing upon her. The horses crawled, their driver was asleep, nothing would bring her quickly, quickly to the two people she most desired to see! At last the carriage halted before Thayer's home. She was out and up the steps before the driver had descended from his seat. She pulled the bell impatiently. Again

and again she rang it. While the last peal was sounding through the house the door swung open, and Hughes stood before her. At the sight of his face her composure, which had been on the verge of a collapse, returned to her with a rush. In the face of any crisis Hilda never failed herself or others.

Toward the last of the fortnight's steady work Thayer grew moody and irritable. He began to feel the inspiration under which he had been so steadily working leaving him, and he was trying to force it to remain. That his growing feeling of lassitude and irritation was due almost solely to physical depression he did not stop to consider. For two weeks he had thrust aside every law of regular living, and he was not yet ready to pay the penalty. For he had not yet reached the place where he was willing to make a period in his work and he was beginning to see that he had delayed the greatest thing too long.

Thayer had found in Clodah all that he could desire in the way of a model. Her physical beauty was as near perfect in entirety as could well be, and there was a nameless something about her, a subtile intuition that inspired him without his being aware of the graciousness of

it. The spirit of commercialism was in her modelship eliminated, and for the special subject for which she was being used just now there was peculiar inspiration in her presence. Her face had in it all the innocence and shrinking purity that could have filled the soul of the Christian maid for whom was reserved a fate beyond that of the crunching teeth of Hibernian dogs or lions' jaws.

Thayer, with his fashion of looking at things from his own standpoint purely, could never know a tithe of the emotions that filled her face with a pain beyond utterance, though that same standpoint made him thoroughly alive to all the beauty of the soul so perfectly revealing its inner life. But after a few days the sense of utter shame left her. The spirit as well as the tender palm can be hardened by contact with heavy things, and it was only the thing inevitable that Clodah should grow accustomed to what at first she felt was beyond endurance. She began to realize that her own personality was for him sunk in that of the useful model which he was standing up against a post and painting.

And so by the time he was ready for the face the expression which had been for him at first so great an inspiration was wanting. When he finally began work on it he was worn out physically and mentally, and for several days he painted in and out with exasperating regularity. What had been to him a pillar of guiding light had vanished and left him in a mist peopled with vague shadows. In all his physical weariness visual memory refused to come to his aid. Somehow his wizard hand had lost its cunning.

It was then that his evil mood began to settle on him. His directions to Clodah were curt and brief. His face grew heavier and more lowering. There was no more merry talk together in the intermissions of work; only grim, dull silence. Clodah tried bravely to recall all that Hughes had told her of the strange moods that governed Thayer's spirit, and she tried desperately hard to understand him, and to forestall annoyances. She knew that he was troubled, but how that should incite him to do and say cruel things to her and to the devoted Hughes was beyond her understanding.

So far she herself had escaped without much more than the dread atmosphere about her, but the scapegoat Hughes had been lashed up and down many times, and at such times she trembled with a pitiful fear. Before her Thayer kept himself pretty well in check, but for nearly a week now she had had not one voluntary caress, not one that meant to her anything more than the mechanical performing of a recently acquired habit. She began to feel irrepressibly lonely, and there was stealing over her her first fit of desperate homesickness. She strove bravely to crush it down, but the disease can be controlled only up to a certain point, and with poor little Clodah the limit of resistance was almost reached.

One morning the breakfast hour had been unbearable. Thayer had passed a sleepless night, and his face was more haggard and his eyes more hollow than ever. Since midnight he had been in the studio before his half-finished picture, sunk in the blue-devil mood of abject discouragement in which he indulged himself before every one of his paintings at just about this stage of its completion. Clodah heard him

go, and blessed the chance his absence gave her for tears so bitter that it was wonder they failed to give her ease. It was only toward dawn that she herself had fallen into an unrefreshing slumber. Thayer had to be called for breakfast, and Hughes inquired for him.

"Shall you call him then, ma'am,?" he asked.

"Oh you, Hughes," Clodah made quick answer, with a sad admission in the swift response that touched her faithful servitor to the quick. When Thayer at last appeared he quickly lost himself in the Times with only a nod to Clodah, and she poured his coffee and watched the steam slowly settle on it as it cooled, and then poured out more only to have it meet with the same neglected fate.

"I'm going out for a short walk," Thayer volunteered finally after he had sat at the table long enough to constitute a conventional time, and had eaten nothing. "I shan't be back for an hour, but when I come, for heaven's sake, Clodah, be ready. Don't keep me waiting. When I want to work I want materials ready."

She assented quietly, and watched him leave the room with a look in her eyes that brought

an oath against his master to Hughes' heart. Then she went slowly up to her room, all the pretty life gone out of her, and shut herself in.

"Poor little lady!" Hughes muttered as she went away. "And the mortal pity is, nobody can do a thing. If she nor I didn't care so much it wouldn't make him be so, but he knows we both of us care like agony; we can't hide it from him, and it's the nature of him."

Upstairs Clodah had dropped on her knees beside her bed. She was almost past enduring her present woe. Her pitiful homesickness for her father, her people, her barren island, was welling up within her in a rising flood. Her sense of mystery before the nature of the man she had married had been ever present with her during these last few days, a mystery that had steadily grown in intensity and gloom. She felt utterly alone in the heart of a heartless city. From her father she had heard but once since she left him. The letter had been a characteristically reserved one, with nothing of the pent-up love expressed in it that Clodah had voiced in her closing cry, "My father, my father!" She had early realized the impotence of written words,

yet now in her darkest hour there came to her an irresistible longing to get nearer to her father by that means if no other.

In a moment she rose and went over to a little writing table, and sat down before it. With her pretty paper, Thayer's gift, spread out before her she began her second letter home.

"My father," she wrote. At the sight of the words her father's face rose so suddenly, so vividly before her that it seemed to her she was choking with the longing to see him. She saw his kind face; she felt the clasp of his arm about her just before she stepped into the boat that was to bear her away into a life whose path was hidden from her; she heard his words as he voiced his fears, his forebodings, his great love for her that had made him forget for her sake those fears and misgivings; had made him recognize her newly-born woman's right to choose for herself.

For the first time her definite doubt, the doubt that sooner or later comes to every young wife, stole into her mind. Had she chosen for her good? Those fatherly fears, had they not been right? He had not known nor had she what

manner of man this was who had mastered her and filled her with love of him till she was ready at his first word to give up all things else for that love of him. She thought of her first letter to her father, of her perfect joy in the writing of it. She recalled sentence after sentence, every word breathing out absolute confidence in the man she had wedded. She looked down at the page before her: "My father:—" Was it possible for her to go on, possible for her now to write him a letter that would not give him pain unutterable?

She laid her head down on her hands. For the present she was past tears. Suddenly she took up her pen and began to write quickly, nervously. When she folded the sheet together her face was almost peaceful.

"I hae been foolish to fear his love be gone," she murmured to herself. "Else why, as my feyther said, should he come the weary way back after a whole year to get me an' take me back wi' him, to be his wife." She threw up her head, so lately bowed under a weight of woe, with a lovely pride. "For I be his wife, an' no man's else, an' I hae forgot all that Hughes

hae told me about the strange fits that come on him. I hae thought o' myself an' my loneliness, an' not o' him. When next I get lonely I shall say to myself that my husband be a great man, an' that he be too busy all the time to play wi' me like a doll, an' I must get to be a woman quick, an' be able to help him, an' whatever he tells me to do I must do. I must be happy this morning instead o' sad as I hae been to my shame for days past."

Thus reminded of the passing time, she looked out of the window and caught sight of Thayer just ascending the steps. She began to tear off her clothes hurriedly, and to unbind her hair, and just as Thayer reached her corridor she came out of her room wrapped in her long cloak. Some innate perception which her marriage was developing made her not show him that she had seen his arrival from her window.

"I was just going up," she said with her first innocent deception. Thayer made no reply, and she flitted before him up the long stairway.

For an hour Thayer painted with a mad persistence, an unyielding stubbornness. He was working on the face, and by swift degrees a wild fury seized him because of his inability to catch the lines he wanted. He worked nervously, he painted and painted out, and scraped the canvas afresh, and began again, and all to no avail. At last he flung down his brushes with a very demon raging within him and swore harshly.

"What are you thinking about this morning?" he demanded. "Can't you take that rapt, saint look off your face, and look some of the shame you used to feel? Do you suppose her mind was full of womanish delights, her last new gown, her next ball? Don't stare at me so, in heaven's name. Come down and rest a little while, and then see if you can't get into some sort of sympathy with her. My God, you ought to!" He laughed harshly.

Clodah had been sitting before him with a very glory of peace in her eyes. The strange comfort she had gained from the writing of that tiny sheetful had stayed with her. Somehow out of the bitterness of the night had come a sweetness of rest and calm. She had forgotten in those past days of dread the one great thing in all her swift courtship, the fact that Thayer had held her close in his heart through one long year of absence from her, and had come at last through love of her to take her away. He must have loved her tenderly, and that one thing granted Clodah had no other sorrow. So for nearly an hour she had been thinking thoughts far removed from her surroundings. She was living over again those days of early marriage. Thayer had disturbed her by no directions whatever and she had been dreaming in peace. Now in a flash all her dreams were rudely, brutally shattered, and she stared at him in shrinking dismay.

At the dumb distress in her eyes Thayer turned away in ill-concealed irritation. He went over to a distant window and stood in moody silence beside it. Clodah was standing

with drooping head where he had left her. For one black moment a wild despair seized her in an icy grip. Then mercifully she recalled Thayer's own words spoken to her that first day he had ever so slightly neglected her: "Sometimes I say things, Clodah, and it gives me a sort of devilish satisfaction to see people wince." She recalled Hughes' hesitating counsel. She made herself think again of her father's words, and then she raised her head from its bent lowliness. All that she needed to make her quite happy was the assurance that her husband loved her, and of this she assured herself again and again. She glanced longingly at Thayer, who was still standing at the window, his hands thrust deep in his pockets, and his whole attitude full of a great despair and misery. If she had felt free to follow her loving impulse she would have run over to him and slipped her tender arms about his neck with a sympathy whose only fault would be that it could not comprehend.

But she had learned among her many lessons of the last few weeks not to follow all of her impulses, so she crushed back the longing

and desire, and then there came upon her like a withering blight a great realization of her impotence, her powerlessness to help him. What could she do to aid him? He had not been satisfied that she looked happy. How did he want her to look? He had asked her if she sympathized with the girl not at all.

She went softly over to the painting and stood before it, staring at it wistfully. Would it tell her nothing? She looked at the figures in the foreground. Those of the soldiers had been filled in somewhat, and the face of one of them, the one who held the winning die, had been painted in detail. Clodah shivered at the expression of his eyes. Somehow as she stared the bent and tortured figure of the girl took on a new meaning to her. For the first time a faint breath of comprehension came to her of the martyrdom meted out for the bound figure. Her eyes widened with a horror that was dim and without foundation. It was just at that moment that Thayer turned from his fruitless window-gazing and came back to her.

"Get up there," he said abruptly. "We'll try it once more." She did not move instantly

and he looked at her with added impatience. On that instant his eyes lighted up with a blue flame. The dawn of intelligence was in her face.

"Here," he said quickly, "get up there before you lose your thought." He pushed her half gently, half roughly, across the room. He slipped her arms through the heavy hanging chains with a queer little laugh that was full of subdued excitement.

"You don't exactly need the chains," he said, more to himself than to her, "but it may give atmosphere."

Clodah had not looked at him; had looked at nothing. Her eyes were wide and staring. Suddenly she put out one fettered hand.

"I got an awful thought," she muttered blankly.

Thayer laughed with soft exultation. "Keep it," he said. All his fire had miraculously returned to him. His blood was red again, was coursing swiftly through his veins. After that he worked feverishly. When he looked at her again he smiled, the smile of one whose dearest

wish is granted. Her eyes were still open and staring with a blank horror, the horror that had held them ever since Thayer had pushed her away from the painting.

Suddenly she flung her hands together in appeal. The heavy chains rang as she clashed them together.

"I canna bear it," she cried hoarsely. " 'Tis too horrible—the thoughts I think. Kirk!"

Her voice rang out. It was the first time she had ever called him by his given name. He glanced at her and then at his work. Never before did he place so many strokes with such precision in so short a time. She cried again, imperiously.

"It's all come to me wi' the might of a Rohan storm. 'Tis a shame to me to make me play the shame o' the girl! 'Tis a shame to you to paint her shame!"

Another rapid glance he gave her, then went swiftly on as before. She saw that he had not heard, or, if hearing, had not heeded. She waited another moment; then she sprang swiftly from her place. The forgotten chains pulled

her back. Thayer called to her sharply. While she still struggled blindly he came and lifted her back bodily.

Clodah's first instinct toward Thayer was always obedience. In spirit she yielded to that instinct now rather than to her constraining bonds, for her ideas of wifehood were Paulistic in their exceeding primitiveness. But the old corroding shame that had eaten into her very soul came back to her as she stood there bound less by the chains that held her than by her marriage vows. Long had she stood in ignorance before the canvas of the Supreme Martyrdom. But she read its story now.

Thayer had gone quickly back to his work. His fever was at such high tide that the interruption was not a serious one, and its annoyance only momentary. He hardly glanced at her now, but was plying his brushes with lips pressed tight together, and a slow, dark flush mounting high on his cheeks.

Clodah crouched against the pillar. She was shivering convulsively. Suddenly she threw back her head in a paroxysm of emotion, and so doing she saw above her that hateful head

of the grinning satyr. The sight of it seemed to act as a mordant to all her shifting ideas and impressions. Flashes of memory ran through her brain like shining swords. Her first night in London; that face that sneered and jeered at her while she murmured her first daring confidence to her husband; her crouching before it; Thayer's answer; his words; his manner; it all came back. He had had her pose for him that first night, had drawn her daily since; finally had asked of her this—this! He had wanted nothing of her since their marriage but that she let him draw her, draw her, draw her! It all rushed through her brain in great throbbing waves. Trivialities sprang up and fitted into place as links. Suddenly she staggered to her feet and stood boldly upright against the pillar.

"Kirk Thayer," she muttered, "I hae got to know somethin'. Hark to me an' tell me. Why did ye wed me?"

Thayer heard the words as from a great distance. Their import failed to strike him. His brow contracted, and he shook his head in annoyance. Clodah's voice rose high and shrill.

"Why did ye wed me?" The cry was insistent. He shrugged his shoulders.

"Why did I marry you?" he repeated absently. He stared at the canvas. He turned to Clodah with one of those impersonal glances that at first had filled her with infinite loneliness, but that made her thrill now with an anger that was almost divine. He saw her face aflame with new feeling, defiance, challenge, demand, wrath. He frowned. The whole atmosphere was charged with new vibrations, inharmonious and jarring.

"Don't, Clodah," he said almost gently. It seemed full of pathos to him, that this final moment should be so ill attuned to his own mood. He waited patiently, but something in her eyes riveted on his made him stir restlessly at last, and a little gleam showed between his narrowing lids—hardly a cruel light; rather the eager experimentalism that shines in the eyes of the scientist as he bends above the animal bound and quivering on the vivisection table.

"Why?" he repeated. He looked at the painting and then at her. "Why?" he said

again. With one hand, white and beautiful and cruel, he pointed to the painting. Instantly he turned to it again. One swift stroke, another—

Thayer stood back. He gave the canvas a twist to the left, and step by step retreating, he drew nearer to the girl behind him. With every passing second a greater rapture thrilled him. With every pulsating throb his brain sang to his spirit and his spirit to his brain that before him was his masterpiece, wrought out.

So rapt was he in exultation and pride that he knew no other presence. So lost was he in triumph that he never glanced at the girl still upright against the pillar. He did not see the slow death agony that settled over her face. He did not hear the low cry that fled her lips, nor the thud of her body as it dropped without a struggle at the foot of her cross of torment. Above her the black satyr laughed remorselessly. Almost at her side her husband stood, and in front of her, where Thayer had twisted it for another light, gleamed the figure of the Christian maid with the look in her eyes that had widened Clodah's during the moments when her

spirit had been blackened with the knowledge of exquisite sin, and her faith in love and honor and sincerity had died the death.

* * * * * * *

Thayer half stumbled over the platform before he caught sight of Clodah lying in a twisted little heap where she had fallen. He bent over mechanically and loosed her wrists and arms from the brass chains that she dragged down with her. Then he lifted her in his arms and carried her over to a low couch. He lowered her head and dashed a little cold water over her face. In a few moments he saw the flutter that heralds returning consciousness. He stood by her till she opened her eyes, and so lost was he in his own thoughts that he did not notice how she shrank from him nor how the white lids closed against him as if to shut him out. His hands were plunged deep in his pockets and he was biting his under lip nervously.

"You'd better lie quiet for a few moments," he said with a sort of absent kindliness in his tone. "By and by I'll carry you downstairs if you aren't able to walk."

Then he left her and went over to the

painting again to stand before it, lost in its beauty. What he had wanted to express was there, all of it; a rigid tenseness born of the resolve to suffer and to die bravely for the faith; a great shrinking of the delicate body from the publicity of its shame; a greater shrinking of the spirit from the shame to come. He could have kissed the color of it; have caught the painted stuff to his heart in the ecstasy of his satisfaction. That all the other figures were more or less unfinished did not enter into his thought. The great stumbling block in the way of success had been removed that day.

How long he stood before the canvas he never knew. Something suddenly reminded him of a duty undone, and after some moments burdened by that consciousness he set to work to find out what it was. He finally remembered Clodah; that she had fainted; that perhaps she needed attention. He turned at last to the couch where he had borne her. The couch was empty.

It was perhaps half an hour later when Thayer left the studio. A reaction from his exultant excitement had set in, and nervous quivers ran through every fiber of him. He felt weak and worn. For fifteen days he had been keyed up, at first by inspiration, later through sheer force of will. Now he was feeling the effects of his long nerve dissipation. His limbs trembled as if he had just recovered from a wearing fever. His first impulse was to seek the outer air. He had taken a hat, and his hand was on the outer door when he again remembered Clodah.

Half absently, half in gratitude for her part in his triumph, he turned and went back upstairs. He tapped lightly at the door of her room. There was no response. He tried the knob. The door was locked. He waited a moment; then, with his mind still on what had filled it for a fortnight past, he went down to the lower

hall. As he was leaving he caught sight of Hughes and called to him.

"By the way, Hughes, I'm going down to the club. Tell Mrs. Thayer so if I shouldn't be back till late."

"Yes, sir," said Hughes, "and beggin' your pardon, Master Kirk, but I saw her a few minutes ago, and it struck me she looked very ill."

"Is that so?" said Thayer abstractedly. "Nothing serious I think, but perhaps you'd better send for Doctor James, Hughes." Then he went briskly out and down the avenue.

Hughes looked after him with grieved indignation in his faithful eyes.

"Her face was that o' death," he muttered with a painful foreboding, "as she came down them stairs. If a dagger had been stuck in her she couldn't have looked in greater agony. It's a shame there ain't any but men in this house to look after her."

He stood in indecision for a few moments; then he ascended the stairs. When he reached the corridor that led to Clodah's room he again hesitated. Finally he went up to her door and knocked gently. There was no answer; he

knocked again; still no answer. A sudden terror seized him and he thundered at the door.

"Mrs. Thayer," he called. "Ma'am!"

He heard a faint movement within. "Is that you, Hughes?" Clodah called faintly. Her voice startled him by its thinness, its utter lack of life.

"Are you quite well, ma'am?" he asked anxiously. "Because I'm on the point of goin' for the doctor, ma'am."

There was a pause; at length Clodah spoke.

"Perhaps you'd better get him, Hughes. And, Hughes, will you go yourself? I shall feel more certain—" her voice faltered.

"Yes'm," Hughes returned with an unusual gruffness put on to hide his anxiety. "I'll go myself, and be sure to bring him back with me." He turned away, but came back once more. "I can't do anything for you before I go, ma'am? There ain't no one here, ma'am."

"No," Clodah answered gently. "Just go, Hughes."

Something like half an hour later Hughes stood again before Clodah's room, and tapped softly. There was no reply, no movement to

break the oppressive silence. He knocked again, a third time, a fourth; then he softly turned the knob. He opened the door gradually, until finally a part of the dainty bed came into view. Then he flung the door boldly wide, and stared about him in a bewilderment that had at the bottom no mystery for him. The room was empty. Clodah was gone.

* * * * * * *

Some intuition that lay like a shining pearl in the depths of the serving man's nature told him, many minutes before he went down to go through the rest of the house, that his search for his master's wife would be utterly vain. Plausible explanations as to her absence passed through his mind mechanically, but in his soul he was convinced that he knew the truth. Clodah might have gone for a walk; she might have gone up to the studio; she might be in the drawing-room, the library. All these possible solutions of her absence passed through his brain, but no one of them dimmed for a moment the clearness of his first instantaneous conviction that Clodah Thayer had gone, had left her husband's home. He stared about him with eyes

that were unseeing. All he noted was a bright splotch of color lying on the bed, a long rosy garment of rich brocade, something that Clodah had worn down to breakfast several times, the garment she had had wrapped around her when he had met her an hour before coming down from the studio. He remembered her face as he had seen it then, pale with a sickening pallor; her great blue eyes wide and staring and unwinking. She had passed him as if she were unaware of his nearness to her, though they were so close he could have put out his hand and touched hers.

When Hughes left the bedchamber it was with a bowed form that all his sixty years had yet failed to bring upon him. He ascended the stairs slowly, painfully. After all, she might have gone up there. He pushed open the door and looked in. He peered eagerly into shadowy corners, but she was nowhere to be seen. Suddenly the door bell clanged loudly. He went down to intercept the doctor and send him away with the plea of sudden recovery. Then, as in duty bound, he went through all the house. He was standing in the library when another peal

rang through the house. It was loud, imperative, insistent. Another like it, another, and another. When Hughes opened the door Mrs. Davenport stood before him.

Hilda Davenport listened in silence to Hughes' hurried and broken tale. Out of all Thayer's friends Hughes had approved in an unqualified degree of Mrs. Davenport, and in his horror and distress and fear of doing anything that might serve to bring the matter confronting him into needless publicity, he was inclined to look on her sudden and unexpected appearance as a piece of the divine Providence that he believed in implicitly.

"You see, ma'am," he finished with a voice that was thick with a brave effort to control an uncontrollable tremor, "she was such a tender child. At first I thought he might be goin' to remember her all the time and not get them spells on him that you and I know comes on him. He was that lovin' and tender with her. But by and by they began to come. I went so far as to deliberately forget myself, ma'am, and tell her something about what she might

expect when he got under their influence, and she took it that lovely it touched me deep. You see, she worshiped Master Kirk. I never saw anything like the way her life and breathing seemed to be bound up in him. But this mornin' he was devilish, ma'am, beggin' your pardon, like he gets sometimes when he's clear wore out with work, and tryin' to do more than any mortal can do, and he was cruel to her. She's been up there with him every mornin' for two weeks now, and she was up there again this day with him in that mood. What he said or did I don't know, but if there ever was a time, ma'am," Hughes voice grew deep and solemn, "when I could a' thrashed Master Kirk gladly and sound, beggin' his pardon, not carin' whether he was a genius or not and subject to queer streaks, this noon was the time when I met her comin' down the stairs, with her pretty eyes starin' and black with pain, and her face turned whitish yellow. After he'd gone, and I went up to her room and knocked, I wished for the first time in my life, ma'am, that I was a woman. Master Kirk he never had any women servants about the place, and when he brought

Mrs. Thayer here he never changed. There wasn't a woman but her in the house, and she needed one sore. If you'd only come earlier, ma'am."

"Suppose you take me up to her room," Mrs. Davenport said, after she had turned the situation over rapidly in her mind. "Perhaps after all there may be some word, something to show us where she has gone."

So Hughes in bitter sorrow took her to his young mistress' room, and stood in silence outside the bedchamber while Mrs. Davenport went within. Hilda glanced comprehensively about her as she entered. She noted the rose-colored cloak lying across the bed, and a pile of hastily flung-off clothing on the floor of the dressing room. At last she saw the little writing desk, open, with its ink-well unstopped, and on it some folded sheets of paper. She took them up hesitatingly. They were not addressed, and for a moment she was tempted to open them. But she laid them gently down. She stood in indecision for a few minutes then sat down and scribbled a few words on a loose sheet of paper.

"Will you come home as soon as you receive this? Clodah is gone. Hilda."

She went out into the hall, where she found Hughes waiting patiently.

"I have written a note to Mr. Thayer," she said. "Have you any idea where you might find him?"

"He said to tell Mrs. Thayer he was at the club, ma'am."

"Then try to reach him as quickly as possible. I am going up to the studio. If he returns unexpectedly, I am there, Hughes."

Hilda went slowly, almost reluctantly, to the floor above. When she stood before the studio door she felt a shrinking creep over her that comes to a lingerer without a death chamber. Finally she put out her hand firmly and pushed wide the door. The familiarity of the place rushed back to her sickeningly as she entered,—the long mornings she had spent there, the lazy afternoons!

The painting which held Thayer's last work stood with its back to the entrance door. Instinctively she knew what it held, and here she

felt was the explanation of the tragedy that had occurred. She went swiftly over to the easel and stood before it. For moment after moment she gazed, and as she stood there tears gathered thick in her eyes.

"The tortured soul!" she breathed. "Ah, Kirk, Kirk, you have done more than merely crucify a body. You have put out your wanton hands and crushed to its death a spirit." She bent closer as her eyes caught the gleam of wet paint. "It was the face you did this morning!" she half groaned.

She flung out her hands in despair and went over to a window that overlooked the street. She leaned heavily against the casement trying to conquer some of the unpleasant, and at this time undesirable, emotion that was shaking her. It was only a short time afterward that she saw a hansom rolling rapidly down the street. It stopped before the house and Thayer sprang out.

It was in the corridor leading to Clodah's room that they first came face to face. Thayer flushed a dark red as his eyes met Hilda's.

"I am here solely by accident," she said with

an icy note in her voice. "There is something in here you should see, though it is undirected. It may be a clue."

He opened the door for her to pass through. When he entered he closed it behind him.

"How is it you have so relentlessly made up your mind that she is gone?" he demanded. "Has she taken things? She is probably only gone for a walk."

"Perhaps you know her wardrobe," Hilda suggested.

Thayer flung open doors and cabinets with a growing excitement. He strewed the floor recklessly with garments of every description. Suddenly he looked from one drawer he had just flung open.

"The little peasant dress she had on when I took her," he muttered. "It's gone."

"Ah!" Hilda breathed softly. She went over to the writing table and took up the note lying there. "I don't know what this is," she said. "It may be a message of some sort."

Thayer snatched it nervously from her hands. While he was reading it Hilda scribbled another one rapidly, and gave it with some whispered di-

rections to the disconsolate Hughes outside. She came back into the room just as Thayer turned toward her with a heavy groan.

"Here," he said hoarsely, "read it—you have a right. I'll tell you the tragedy of contrasts later." He sat down on the bed and put his head down on his arms.

"My father:" Hilda read, to her surprise, "I am sore distressed. I can not see you. I could not tell you my sorrow if you were here. I am not going to send you this that I am writing. But I can look at the words and think you are here by me, and so it comforts me. There are things about my husband I do not understand. I try very hard, and I get no nearer him. I know so little. If I could tell about his pictures I might help him, but I am so ignorant of his life. I try to do all I can. I have given up to him what if I had known about before I left home I could not have gone away with him. I have done all things he has asked of me because I love him, and because I have believed he knows better than I. But I am weary to see you. The loneliness is more

than I can bear. I think on what you said to me the day I left home, that it were a sudden and hasty thing. I can not write you now such a letter as I sent you the day after I left home. My father, my father! And yet you said to me why should he have come the weary way back for me after a whole year if he did not love me truly. What could have made him come to get the simple maid that I be if it were not the truest love? For I am his wife and I love him to the death, and I will believe. And when I come back to this room, my father, I will write you such a letter as will make you happy; not like this one which you will never see, but a happy one such as the writing of this foolish thing has made it possible for me to write. Ah, my father, I am happy, for he is a great and wonderful man, and such men, they tell me, talk with creatures of another world, and I should not wonder that he has not always time for me. I will write you again, my father, this afternoon, a happy, happy letter. Your Clodah."

Hilda laid the letter gently down. She stood

in silence a moment looking at Thayer's bowed head. Then she went over to him.

"I think there is no doubt but that she has fled," she said. "I say that with no knowledge of what passed between you this morning. I have just come down from the studio," she added. "I have seen the painting, the wet paint. Now, what can be done? I am thinking of The Rohan when his daughter comes back to him like this. Had she any means of getting home?"

Thayer got up and went over to her dressing table. He took up a tiny purse that lay there and opened it.

"I don't know how much money she had," he said. "She had the heretofore unheard-of ignorance of not knowing how to spend it. I gave her a good deal at the beginning of the week, and it's all here and more. Confound it!" he added with irritation, "she might have felt free to take a gown or so and a little cash along in her mad career."

At that moment there came a timid knock at the door. Thayer went over and flung it open. Hughes stood without. He handed in a note. It was merely a sheet of paper, folded several

times, and directed hurriedly to Thayer. He unfolded it hastily, and read it. Then he handed it to Hilda with a grim smile.

"She has your method," he said shortly. "She doesn't reproach me."

Mrs. Davenport took the sheet with an indignation that rose almost beyond control.

"I had thought to go without a word," it opened abruptly. "I have not words to say what I would, and I dare not try with the poor speech I have. But when I reached the station I thought perhaps it was not dutiful, though I know not your laws. But I am your wife, and perhaps you have the right to know where I am going. It is to my father, to my island I am going, and I care enough for you yet to bid you not to follow. The anger of my people is swift and heavy, and you could not land on my island unharmed. I have taken nothing you gave me. My father put in my hand when I left him a sum of money that will take me back to him. He was right and I was wrong. I have tried to forgive you my shame. I say over and over what Hughes told me, that great men like

you have not feelings like the rest of us, and do not look on aught but themselves and their work. I have naught to say to you but good by."

The note was unsigned and undated and sent by a messenger boy. Hilda Davenport read it with every nerve of sympathy alive within her. She put it down and faced Thayer with eyes that blazed. He stood before her, his hands thrust deep in his pockets, his brow drawn in frowns, and with a hard smile about his mouth.

"Speak it all out, my dear Hilda," he said unpleasantly. "The tragedy you foretold has occurred with all the intensity you could well desire, and with your usual good fortune you chance to be in at the death. You said you would put in your 'told you so' for good and all in your congratulatory letter to me, and you've kept your word marvelously well. But the phrase is on the tip of your tongue. Let it come forth, I pray."

Mrs. Davenport looked at him, the light of a great wrath in her eyes. She saw the beautiful face distorted and twisted by a reckless sneer. His lips were parted with a smile that

was not good to see; his eyes were aglow, too, with a great rage. But beneath the evil smile and the frown and the angry eyes there lay a subtile something that Hilda was quick to penetrate. The eyes were heavy and full of wrath, but beyond all the evil sparkle there lurked a deep pain and an eating regret that she grasped at. The fury within her own eyes died down like the leap of a flame. She moved over to him swiftly.

"When I say a thing like that I mean it," she said softly. "My dear Kirk, it was so inevitable I could not but foresee. I thank God the girl has gone back to her father. She and you will be happier so. I had feared at first so much more fearful a thing for her in her despair. But now for this chapter in your life there can be silence—"

Thayer threw off her detaining hand. A sudden change swept over his face at her last words. He stood almost bewildered for a moment, then turned abruptly aside. He picked up the letter Clodah had written that morning to her father, the letter that she was not to send, the precursor of a happier message.

That was what her dreamy smile of the morning meant, the smile he had stricken from her lips. Over every detail of the morning and of the month his mind flashed its rapid way. All the revelations of her love for him, a love that was mighty to stand strong in the face of much that was to her innocence a fearful shock and an awful revealing; all her eager desires to be of service to him; all her winsomeness; this last morning—this morning— Thayer turned to Mrs. Davenport with a face from which every sign of hardness had gone. It had suddenly become haggard; the pain that had lurked in the cynical eyes came boldly forth and shone down upon her as she stood before him.

"There can be no silence," he said slowly. "She loved me with a love that was unquestioning, that asked for no return, and may her tender spirit forgive me, it met with none. I brought her here with a purpose, and I have fulfilled it. But until I have made expiation I shall have no peace—" He had stopped and was calculating rapidly. "Perhaps I can head her off before she gets to the island if I start

to-night. If not—" His lips set in a fashion that Hilda recognized.

She made no comment on his resolve, but she did interpose here. "If she has gone to the island, Kirk, she is right in saying it will not be safe for you to follow her, and—she may not come to you."

He winced a little. "Wherever she has gone I shall go after her," he said briefly.

"Then," said Hilda swiftly, "you shall not go without Harry. Yes, he is here. Hughes just brought me an answer to a note. I came from Russia to meet him, and in a strange fear and boding premonition I came here first. He shall go with you to-night, for he is the only man who can get you across the water-line of the island if Clodah shall indeed have reached there before you overtake her."

Thayer hesitated obviously, and Hilda smiled.

"My dear, you can wrestle with bears and throttle lions, but a bullet from The Rohan's gun you can not stand against. Now I shall leave you. Harry will be at the station at six o'clock to meet you. You will not mind him, he will not weigh upon you at all." She gathered up her

gloves and purse and dainty belongings; then she came over to him with a tenderness and comprehension in her eyes that made him flush again. She laid her hands on his breast.

"Dear," she said softly, "be sure before you move that this time it is for her. Be sure that there is sincerity of desire before you run the risk of possessing her again."

Thayer seized her hands and pressed them savagely in his. His lips parted as if to speak, but they closed resolutely. Hilda moved toward the door and he went over and opened it for her. As she went down the stairs he re-entered Clodah's room and closed the door softly behind him.

On the morning of the third day after Thayer had left London a party of three, two men and a woman, might have been seen standing at the Skerra wharf on the dreary coast of Sutherlandshire. Half a dozen sailors down on the shore were busy with a boat and its launching. This last looked to be a serious matter despite the sturdy build of the boat and the skill of the boatmen. The sea was high; the whole coast had been swept by a fearful storm the day before, and the waters were still raging. The regular boat that plied three times a week between Skerra and Rohan Island was out of repair, and the travelers who had so suddenly appeared on the scene had demanded immediate transportation. For hours they had been obliged to lie over, but with the first dawn of day they were on the beach.

The journey from London to Skerra had been a nightmare of inconveniences and disaster for

Thayer and his companions. There had been one mild wreck and another breakdown. Thayer had at last reached the stage of continued and unappeasable rage at the incessant delays. Davenport had been a tower of refuge in every crisis, for Thayer soon found himself beyond the power of exercising a critical judgment in any matter. Hilda had stood everything with her characteristic composure. Thayer's unbounded amazement when he saw her at the station with her husband was turned to meekness and submission by her calm statement that she intended to go with them.

"Ought she to go, really?" he had asked weakly of Davenport.

Davenport smiled gravely. "I have let her decide that question," he said, "as I have let her decide that my presence here was a necessity. I can only add my conviction to hers, however, Mr. Thayer, that if there is any sort of feeling between you and The Rohan you may be wise in allowing me to accompany you. I may not serve you, but at least I shall not do you harm. As for Mrs. Davenport, she tells me her instinct forces her to go, and she is a woman, Mr.

'Thayer, of remarkable instinct. I never stand out against her when she begins to exercise that gift."

They both laughed, and Hilda slipped her arm fondly within her husband's. Thayer stared at them both for a full minute. Then he smiled.

"I suppose you know I have adored your wife," he said crisply. "If she had let me I would have made a mad fool of myself and of her. Instead of allowing that she has turned my mad worship of her into an enduring friendship." He paused a moment, and his eyes seemed to pierce through and through the man standing before him. "I don't know how much your wife has told you of the cause and purpose of my trip to Rohan Island. Not much, I fancy, it's not her way. I should rather like to have you know about it, and when she begins on it will you please ask her not to spare me?" Then the train had puffed in and they had settled themselves for their long journey to the north of Scotland.

When at last all the delays were over and they reached Skerra it was to find the storm

raging, and no boats putting out that night. All the way they had inquired persistently for Clodah, but for all trace of her she might have vanished from the face of the earth. When they found no sign of her at Skerra, some of the fishermen suggested that she might have taken the packet boat at Tongue, ten miles below, which would lengthen the sea trip for her, though it would do away with the awful ride they had taken over roads unspeakable to arrive at this tiny fishing village.

At last, a little after six o'clock, they were off. The sea was rolling high, and the boat was tossed about unmercifully. All of them were good sailors, but the passage, always dangerous, was rendered ten times more so by the storm of the previous day, and the prudence of the trip was questionable. They had gone but a short distance from land before the Sutherlandshire coast was wrapped in a fog as thick as that which hovered always above the sandstone cliffs of Eilean Rohan. Davenport was in the bow of the boat, working with the sailors. Hilda was down in the hollow deck wrapped up in all that was available in the

way of coverings. Thayer was sitting opposite her, his head bowed, his face pallid. They had gone more than half the distance that separates the island from the mainland before he moved over and sat down beside her.

"I never dreamed but that we should overtake her before this," he said hoarsely. "Where is she?" There was desperation in his voice.

"I can't help but feel she is with her father," Hilda murmured.

Thayer buried his face in his hands. He began to speak brokenly.

"How shall I ever make her believe in me enough to know that I have come to take her back with me and make her happy? Did you catch that pitiful little note in her message about Hughes, what he had told her? Poor old Hughes, I left him all cut up because I wouldn't bring him along. He has a blind impression that I practised the black art on her up there, tore her heart out of her body and held it up and watched it quiver, and, my God, I did! Poor little thing, poor little thing!"

Hilda made no answer and he did not seem to expect one.

"The loveliness of her!" he went on dreamily. "Her tender fancies, her bright imaginings! If you could have heard her tell some of the things she has told me! That Wizard tale of Glinggling cave! Oh—" he broke off with a groan, "the night she told me that, the night she told me!"

Hilda listened in pitying silence. The boat was ploughing bravely through the rolling sea. At last in a partial lift in the dense fog a dark line stretched across their path. It was the frowning natural barricade of Eilean Rohan, its reach of red sandstone rising straight and sheer from the depth of the sea.

Hilda's breath began to come a little more quickly. That she was about to undergo a unique experience she was well aware. She knew how promptly a wrong to any woman of the island would be resented, and how a sin against the daughter of the island's king could not be wiped out even by blood atonement. If Clodah were already there—she shivered slightly. And if she were not—at all turns there was only complexity and sorrow and tragedy.

She turned her head at last and as she looked

she sprang to her feet with a little cry. They were almost upon the island. Above them frowned the great red cliff. Below, along the rugged curve of the shore, stood a group of plaided men, their faces stern and lowering, their weapons ready. Across the roar of the waters rang The Rohan's voice.

"Turn about an' go back! Ye landed here once too often, man. 'Tis nae safe this day!" His burning eyes were glaring savagely at Thayer, whose white face stood out to him apart from all the rest of the little group the boat held. The sailors looked uncertainly at Thayer and then at Davenport, who all along had given them their orders. The latter now sprang swiftly to his feet.

"Rohan!" he shouted.

"'Tis ye yirsel', Davenport?" The Rohan called thickly. "Wi'—that!" His long arm flung itself out in fearful scorn straight at Thayer. Then he went down to the edge of the shore.

"'Tis nae use, Davenport," he said. "If ye yirsel' hae the mind to step on my shore ye may an' welcome, but that man, the one yir

shieldin', if ye flung a snake black wi' venom out on the land I'd take it up an' hold it to me sooner than ye'll see me let that on shore alive!"

Davenport and Thayer felt themselves swiftly thrust aside. Hilda stepped in front of them both. With all her wrappings the men on shore had taken her up to this time to be one of the boat's crew.

"If Clodah be here let me see her," she pleaded. "I have come with them to do what they can not do, what you will not let them do. I have come to help you to help her, to do for her what you can not do, tenderly as you love her. I love her, too. Let us all come in peace for the sake of her." She stopped, warned by the trembling of her voice that she could go no further.

The Rohan had been staring at her as a lost soul might look on its savior.

"'Tis the hand o' God, lads," he muttered to the three men with him. "'Tis the only woman that can help the lass. She has been led o' the Lord. Let 'em come. 'Tis nae matter."

In a few moments the three travelers stood on shore. Only The Rohan remained to give them greeting, and he stood in heavy silence. Davenport motioned his wife toward their stern host. She went up to him and touched him softly on the arm. He turned to her and looked into her eyes, wet with unshed tears.

"Ah, ma'am, the lass!" he groaned. "Last night it was she came frae Tongue in all the storm, wi' the fever on her, eatin' her life awa', an' her eyes so wild an' full o' horror they killed me an' the kindness in me as I looked."

"In that fearful storm!" Hilda cried.

"Aye," said The Rohan bitterly, "in all that weather. She made some fisher lads bring her ower, an' they did it for her an' me, though it was takin' their own hands for the preparin' o' their deaths wi' the night it was. Ever since she came stumblin' drippin' wet into the house she has had one name on her lips, there be one woman she has shrieked to see. Can ye wonder when I saw ye standin' yon'er ye looked like an angel sent down frae Heaven to my bairn? She longs to see ye; the beautiful lady, she calls

ye. She's lyin' up there now, dyin'. She's goin' swift an' sure—"

He stopped. Thayer strode forward and grasped his arm.

"Dying!" he muttered.

The Rohan shook him off as if he were indeed the venomed snake he had vowed to welcome before him.

"Aye, dyin'!" he repeated savagely, a white anger in his voice. "An' who shall be bold enough to say it shall nae be a life for a life?"

Thayer stood before him, bent and humbled. His face had whitened miserably and his eyes were terrible in their despair. The Rohan looked at him as if he could never get his fill. Twice he opened his lips to speak, and twice he closed them. He started at last to lead the way to his low-browed castle, but he suddenly turned back and faced Thayer once more.

"For the sake o' her," he pointed to Hilda, "who asked it for the sake o' her," he flung his lean arm up toward the cottage where Clodah was lying, "I hae let ye come on this my island wi' the life still in yir miserable body. I be gladder an' gladder that she persuaded me to it,

for if ye hae a speck o' human regret in ye I hae a fearful punishment in store for ye. Almost I see repentance in yir face. If it be so, a great torment awaits ye up yon'er." He led the way hastily up the slope.

It was Hilda who first went into the little bedroom where the only daughter of The Rohan lay tossing in a fever of brain and body. By the bed sat a woman of the island, whose sorrowful face told her sorrowful fear. On the bed lay Clodah. Her face was flushed with the raging heat that consumed her. Her eyes were bright and staring, and her lips moved constantly and rapidly. Sometimes she broke out into a rush of excited words, but the very sound of them served to recall her to herself, for she would look hurriedly and suspiciously about her, and then, the flash of sanity gone, she would lapse once more into her burning babble.

As Mrs. Davenport bent above her Clodah stared at her with eyes at first unseeing, but as she gazed a sudden recognition came into them, a soft delight.

"Ah," she gasped, "'tis the beautiful lady I

hae longed so deep to see. The bright day that ye come to the island! I loved ye from the moment that first I saw ye." Then the momentary consciousness faded from her eyes and she sank into a confused murmur of talk.

As Hilda looked up from the pillow on which the restless, sunny head rolled unceasingly, she saw The Rohan and Thayer standing in the doorway. The Rohan was stern with the self-control of a great grief. Thayer, with eyes as bright and shining as the girl's own, stood gazing toward the place where Clodah lay. Suddenly he took one step forward. On the instant his way was barred by The Rohan's arm. Then the elder man caught a glance from Hilda's eyes, a tender, sympathetic, pleading glance. Slowly his arm dropped to his side, and Thayer's way was clear.

Side by side The Rohan and Mrs. Davenport stood while Thayer crossed the tiny room and bent above the girl's white painted bed. All gleam of saneness was gone from her. She was tossing a little and her fancies were becoming more disturbing.

"Dinna crush it," she plead. "The little white

blossom dinna know it got un'er foot. Dinna crush it all to shapelessness."

Thayer's mind went swiftly back to that night in the studio when she had run away from him over to the black pillar and had crouched beneath it in half terrified fun. From there she had told him of the tiny flower that lay beneath his feet as he came down the side of the Red Rock to meet her. His face contracted with pain and shame. Clodah lay murmuring to herself incoherent petitions that he could not catch. Suddenly her voice rose.

"—the blackness o' the face an' the smile o' the mouth! Unloose me frae the chains, unloose—'tis the shamin' o' me—the shame—the shame—"

Thayer felt himself gently thrust away. Hilda had come back to the bedside and was bending over the girl, holding her close in her strong, beautiful arms. "There, there," she said, as if to a little child, and under the tender voice and the calm strength of Hilda's body the wild excitement into which Clodah had lashed herself was temporarily stilled.

Yet she was quieted only temporarily. Again and again the wildest of terrors, the most horrible fears, came upon her. And through it all Hilda sat beside her and lulled her back to quiet as no one had been able to do in all the weary hours since she had stumbled into the great living room of The Rohan's home, all wet and shivering and burning, stricken to the floor by the strength of the fever that was upon her.

Once, when the girl was sunk in the stupor that followed her violent delirium, Hilda left the bedside to superintend the preparation of some soothing draft that was in the process of making in the kitchen. The Rohan turned aside from his station in the doorway to let her pass, and then followed her out. There was a dumbness of suffering in his hollow eyes that made her heart ache.

"Mrs. Davenport," he began, with a slow heat of anger thrilling his voice, "for the sake o' what ye hae done for my bairn in comin' here I hae let that—man—in her chamber. I hae let him land here alive. Tell me, in the name o' God, what has he done, an' why I may not take

him out like a dog, an' stan' him up an' shoot him down? What has he done? He hae killed my bairn, my only lass!"

Hilda's lips quivered at the helplessness of his hidden grief. She hesitated only slightly before she spoke.

"He did her a great wrong that I can not tell you now, but in all honesty he did not mean to do it. He did not stop to think how different his world was from hers, how differently they must from necessity look at things. He did not stop to make allowances, and because she loved him so she would not let him see that allowances could be made. But when she left his home so unexpectedly, and when he began to see for the first time how without meaning it he had made her suffer so, he came just as quickly as he could to ask her to forgive him and let him take her back."

The Rohan listened gloomily and without conviction.

"The chains that she's been cryin' out about," he said abruptly.

Hilda gave a little, soft cry.

"You must not think he treated her in that

way, cruelly," she urged. "He could never hurt a woman that way."

"There be other ways," The Rohan replied sternly, but Hilda could see that a raw wound had been healed by her reply. Then once again he took up his silent stand before his daughter's bedchamber, and Thayer all the while kept his place at the foot of her bed.

All day and far into the night the delirium held her. Now it was pleased nonsense about flower fancies; now about summer seas and white-winged vessels; now empty sound and unmeaning jargon. But now and then the fevered brain would mount higher and higher in its wild imaginings, and she would shriek out horrible things; now she was held fast in Gling-gling cave, with all the fabled tortures of the suffering girl racking her; again she was being cast into a hollow space filled with ravening beasts. But more often she was bound by chains at the foot of a grinning monster. It was when this vision was upon her that her wildness became uncontrollable. It was under its influence that she shrieked out broken sentences whose horror and pleading drove The Rohan to shut every-

one away from that part of the house save himself and the three who had come from beyond the sea that morning.

Once, in the midst of the delirium, when all of Mrs. Davenport's influence was powerless to combat the strength of the raging fear and torment that held Clodah remorselessly, Thayer, for the first time in all the long hours he had stood and watched the girl, groaned in an utter collapse of his powers of endurance and sank to his knees on the floor. Since then he had not stirred. Hilda bent constantly above the bed, sometimes soothing the sick girl, sometimes helpless before the strength of her tormented brain. So the long night wore away, and as it went it took with it the delirium. But as it went it left behind it a weakness more heart-rending. With the gray of the dawn making more faint and ghastly the candle-light Clodah opened her eyes after a long period of deep stupor, and looked with grave recognition into Mrs. Davenport's face.

"All the weary time I hae known you were by me here," she said faintly, "an' I hae known

too that—he—" her voice faltered and fell. But her tired eyes wandered restlessly about the room.

"Kirk," Hilda breathed softly. Thayer staggered to his feet, and came over to where she knelt beside his wife. The Rohan, within the shadow of the doorway, folded his arms across his mighty chest, as if to hold within him his wrath and just anger. As she saw her husband Clodah's eyes wavered for a moment, and she half turned away her head. Then she faced him proudly with a calm that was regal in its simplicity.

"Almost did I cut it to ribbons," she said. "Before I left I went back to see what it was that you had done wi' me, an' almost did I destroy it entire, an' then—something in it held me back. It must be great, an' if there be in it what you hoped for—perhaps it is right, made right by that. It would hae been all right, all wi' no blame, if only I had been loved as I loved. 'Twas the shame o' that drove me from you."

Thayer dropped on his knees beside her. He

took up one of her little, bloodless hands and held it with a grip that would have made her cry out had she not been past all pain and fever.

"Clodah, Clodah," he groaned. Something in his tone brought a gleam of revelation to her. She lay silent for a moment.

"Perhaps 'twas all wi' me the shame lay," she murmured. "Perhaps you didna mean to shame me yoursel'. Be it all as it may," she finished wearily, "now is nae longer the time for all the heart-burn I hae felt once—"

With an utter disregard of her condition Thayer put his arms about her, and held her up against his breast.

"It is true," he whispered hoarsely, "all true, that when I took you away with me I took you away for that. But now, O Clodah, Clodah—"

She looked up at him and smiled faintly. "'Tis too late," she murmured, "an' 'tis better so. I be but a simple lass, an' thou'rt so great an' learned thou couldst nae but weary o' me an' my silly fancies. Yet there be one little thing." She lifted her bright head from its pillow against his breast. "Feyther," she whispered. Her voice was already growing weaker.

The Rohan strode over from the door where he had been standing with Davenport and his wife.

"Feyther," she whispered, "I dinna know what I hae raved over in my light-headedness, but this man is my husband, an' I loved him, an' I love him." She moved her head restlessly against Thayer's arm. "All o' marriage was strange to me, an' he was strange to me, an' I was strange to him, an' God will forgive us both for any faults we did. I need nae ask thee, feyther, what I want."

The Rohan towered above her bed in impassive silence. Once he tried to speak, and his voice would not obey his will. In the silence she grew restless.

"Put me down," she murmured to Thayer. "Let my feyther hold me so." Simply as a child she held up her face, and Thayer pressed a long kiss on her lips. Then he gave place to The Rohan, who took up Clodah's little body with savage gentleness into his arms. She lay against his breast, her face hidden in the hollow of his neck. She murmured to him from time to time. Still he held her close, both arms

wrapped about her. At last he slowly loosed one hand from its hold of her, and with Clodah's happy eyes on him he reached it out to Kirk Thayer. As the two men clasped hands a lovely smile came over her face. She turned to The Rohan and whispered to him again. After that there was silence.

* * * * * * *

The next evening, in the light of an island sunset, the body of The Rohan's daughter was laid reverently away. Through all the simple ceremonies, through all the grief of The Rohan's people, Thayer moved with an agony of spirit that seemed greater to him than he could bear. Every glance from the honest eyes of the seafaring people was a lash; every word a blow in the face. And the background for every moment of the wearing day was the memory of that simple death scene.

The Davenports had arranged for themselves and him that they should leave for the mainland immediately after the burial, and late that evening, with the words of the bare service still

hanging heavily over them all, The Rohan, alone of all his house, went with them down to the shore, where their boat was manned and in readiness. Between Thayer and The Rohan there was no farewell. As if in memory of the dead girl and that alone, the two men barely touched hands, and Thayer was the first to step aboard. Davenport and his wife lingered. The Rohan rested both hands on Davenport's shoulders, and spoke to him with a face that worked mightily. When he came to Hilda he took her hands and swung her by them to and fro in the intensity of his farewell. At last he put her gently from him, and stood with bowed head as she and Davenport stepped upon the boat.

As they swayed out on the waters Thayer looked back on the island. Only a month ago he had sailed away from the same lone spot in the rainbow glory of the evening sunshine. All the coast had been lined with peasants in their Sunday garb waving a glad farewell to the bonny bride who sat beside him. To-night the sunset glory shone upon a single figure on the rocky shore, black clad and bowed with sorrow, and the

girl he had borne away that night a month before was lying on the other side of the island, her pale body heaped high with the earth to which she had returned.

The station clock was tolling out the hour of nine the evening that they reached London. As they entered a cab Thayer gave the man the order. When the carriage stopped before Thayer's home, the artist, who had perhaps addressed half a dozen sentences to his companions during the whole course of the homeward journey, leaned forward.

"Come in here, both of you," he said quickly. "Let me put you up for the night. Come."

He did not wait for their reply. He sprang quickly out and went up the steps where he pulled the bell vigorously. But the response came speedily, before Davenport and Hilda had joined him, for on the first vibration the door swung open, and Hughes' face peered into the darkness.

"Master Kirk!" he said eagerly, all the pent-up solicitude of the long days and nights since

his master's departure in the old familiar greeting.

Thayer put both his hands on the man's shoulders.

"We'll go back to the old ways, Hughes," he said unsteadily.

He disappeared abruptly within the darkness of the unlighted library. Mrs. Davenport lingered after her husband had followed Thayer, to still the suspense of the man's faithful heart and to give him a tender little message Clodah had whispered for him.

When she at last entered the library she looked anxiously at Thayer. A swift change had come over him, more distressing than the dull apathy which had held him ever since they left the island. His eyes were bright and burning. His color was high. Every motion, every quick, impetuous word, betrayed a state of high nervous pressure almost at its climax. She threw her traveling cloak aside with quick resolve and rang the bell.

"I'm not hungry," she said lightly, "but I do want my tea. Get out the things, Kirk, and move that table up here."

Thayer went quickly and with relief to obey her, and while she was waiting for the hot water she talked lightly, almost gaily, generally to Davenport, now and then a word to Thayer; her whole manner as free from the ghastly cheeriness that is usually displayed after death as anything well could be. With a quick sympathy Davenport aided every sentence, and they were seemingly in full tide of talk and laughter when Hughes came back with the service. He, too, looked at his master with concern. Thayer was at last talking, talking rapidly, and his frequent laugh was high, and sharp, and excited. Suddenly, in the midst of a sentence that had almost all of the old disdainful ring about it, he stammered and faltered. For a moment he sat in silence. Then he got up, and his cup dropped to the floor with a crash.

"Come upstairs with me, both of you," he said with a strained abruptness. "Come up to the studio and let me show you—" He stopped as suddenly as he had begun. He did not look at them, did not wait for them. He left the room and they heard him ascending the stairway with stumbling haste.

Davenport and his wife followed him in silence. Outside the studio door Thayer had paused as if to gather strength and resolution to enter, and there they caught up with him. As they joined him he fumbled blindly at the knob and then flung the door open and stumbled into the room. Hilda shivered as she crossed the threshold. The great height of the studio towered above her with the loneliness of space itself. Its atmosphere struck a chill through her not purely physical. The very spirit of death seemed to hover over it. She stood huddled against the closed door, drawn together in a shuddering tensity. Everything about her, material things, chairs, tables, the clinging, swaying draperies about the room, seemed to hold in their chemical atoms something of the unseen, of the mysterious aftermath of the human soul. She bit her lip hard. In the dim light of the first lamp which Thayer lighted she saw a pale, dull tapestry beyond her curve slowly outward as if a breath from its figured princesses had stirred it. Then under the glare of a great globe of light that flared out near her where she stood unnoticed, she caught herself together with a swift

self-restraint. Another moment of such imaginings and she would be beyond control. She watched her husband eagerly as he brought into ruddy flame the ready laid fire in the great fireplace; she watched Thayer as he went from table to table, from side bracketings to swinging globes. With the dawning of the light these shadows of her brain would flee away and be no more.

Suddenly Thayer motioned to them imperiously. She went over to him, fighting down an almost physical repulsion to what she felt awaited her. He was standing before the illuminated canvas where, just as he had left it almost a week before, the figure of the girl shone out, strong and pure and wonderful. He was staring at it with glowing eyes. His voice as he began to speak was low and eager and excited.

"This is what killed her," he said. "Look at it. See the horror in her eyes. That came when she found out why I had married her. It wasn't enough that I should see the living horror, but I must fix it there. Look at it. Look at it." He wheeled about.

"Over there was where I had her stand, be-

neath that pillar, with her little hands fastened in those dangling chains. She had the lovely courage to pretend to laugh about them, but their cold chilled her, made her feel utterly helpless and alone. She always loathed that satyr's head. The leering thing always had a hateful fascination for her. The first night she was here she noticed it. We were standing by the fireplace yonder and she ran from me over to the hideous thing. Hilda!" His voice rose shrilly. "If you could have heard the lovely little words she said! 'Isna't queer how folks'll mind things! That day a year agone you came—I can ever see the white wings o' the ship that brought you. An' four days back—I'll ne'er forget a little white flower that lay beneath your feet as you came down the cliff to greet me. An' to-night—' " He stopped suddenly in his quoting of her words. "She had been telling me of her ignorance, her innocence, and while she was trying to put it all into words she had her dear eyes fastened on that grinning head and she told me she could never forget it. And she never did, she never did! It racked her to her death!"

Thayer's words came more and more rapidly.

He was laboring under a growing excitement. Once Hilda moved slightly as if to go over to him, but Davenport held her back. She stood within his arms, while Thayer went on almost without a pause.

"I recalled all you had told me, and when at last the moment came that I had to have her for this I told her in all gentleness what I wanted. And even then it was death for her to yield. But after a time, after she grew used to it, she didn't let it hurt her so much; and she was perfect. She didn't know what that painting meant. When I told her that of it which would have told any other woman the whole story, she could not understand. Her absolute innocence was beyond belief. Before I knew her I have sneered time and again at the thought of any woman on this evil earth so snow-white in thought and deed. Then that last morning the devil entered into me and claimed his own. Time after time I just missed the line I wanted, and I grew savage with disappointment. Then I deliberately tore away all that innocence, all that purity. Just so truly as ever Gilles de Retz tore out the hearts of his living victims and held

them up and watched them quiver, just so truly did I tear out the soul from that shrinking body and paint it there in all its agony of dying."

He stopped at last. He was shaking from head to foot. Davenport went up to him.

"And she died loving you after it all, man," he said.

Thayer stared at him blankly.

"After it all," he repeated. "After it all!"

A soft sound broke at last on the stillness of the great room. Thayer looked beyond Davenport to where Hilda was standing alone. She was leaning with her palms outspread upon a table, bowed in almost utter physical collapse. It was her sob they had heard, the first Thayer had ever heard from her lips. It brought him back to himself, steadied him with the suddenness of a miracle. Something within him that had wavered for hours in a shifting center grew suddenly still, and then swung slowly around and pointed straight again.

"Don't, Hilda," he said, with a curious shake in his voice. For the moment he could not control that. "Don't, Hilda. Listen to me: I'm not worth it, no man is; yet they say, all the old

priests and prophets, that from the beginning innocent ones have been slain for the guilty. Even we of to-day grant it freely. And the purpose of it all, and the use of it—I wonder, I wonder! You've told me I was born out of time; a Greek soul thrust naked and shivering into this age of machinery and clanging steel; with abstract ideals and unattainable desires; and in spite of all that, a man cursed with the spirit of Denial; an incarnation of the very essence of Negation."

His hand dropped from Davenport's shoulder. He began to walk restlessly after his old manner up and down the room. Hilda crept over to Davenport and from that refuge watched the man's face, pale and intent.

"An incarnation of the essence of Negation," he repeated slowly, "in spite of ideals. One who denied all things, was fain to curse some God and die, yet could not curse Beauty, and so lived on, and had almost denied that one thing he worshiped, and at last sacrificed to it,—the sacrifice of a heart's hope, the burnt offering of a soul—and by that sacrifice attained—by the gods, yes!"

He stopped before the painting once again. For many minutes he stared at it proudly, triumphantly. Then new lines marked his face, a deepening pain, a growing wonder. Suddenly he raised his head and looked over to where Hilda stood and for a moment his eyes burned into hers. That one moment belonged to them alone out of all time past and to come, and in it no other had a part. For the first time she saw in his eyes the birth of a voluntary, self-amazed self-relinquishment; a slow dawning spirit of renunciation; the giving up not of himself, but of Attainment. His thought leaped across the material space that divided them, past her bond of wifehood, past sex, and questioned—spirit to spirit,—questioned amazedly, indignantly, with pleading. And she answered not at all. Only her eyes exulted.

Thayer turned back at last with a short, quick breath. Then he put out a steady hand, and slowly, resolutely pushed away from him the painting. Davenport's arm tightened about his wife, and he looked down at her. She smiled up at him, still with those exulting eyes. It was to her, to Thayer, to them all, as if with

his own hands he were laying the dead girl away a second time and finally, from the gaze of all the world; not the body of her but the outraged spirit,—the spirit that had looked across the chasm of unfaith and betrayal, and seeing, could not return.

When he turned back to them again it was almost as if that hour had not been, as if the past week had dropped like a pebble into the depths of some still, deep sea. His voice had its old, careless note, its ring of indifference, its absolute lack of personal emotion. Yet the center of things had shifted again. For the second time in his life defeat seemed victory, and victory, defeat. He had conquered,—and had conquered,—and to what end! Surrender! And was that Attainment?

Yet it did not seem failure. He seemed to have stepped upon a plane where such defeat was not loss; where greatness, his greatness, was of little moment. He wondered at the new viewpoint, and then he wondered with his old, half cynical self-probing, how long the plane would balance, how long defeat seem victory, and personal greatness, dross. Yet he realized

too that the old self-inquiry was induced not so much by the old cynicism as by a new, embryonic self-doubt; a new distrust, not of human failings, but of his own. He smiled a little as he realized all this. Then he slowly turned out the last light and left the studio to the shadows of the dying fire. Outside the door and before he closed it he listened a moment. Hilda and Davenport were going down the stairs together. A great loneliness swept over him, a sudden wave from that waste of solitude into which he had been flung to live his life. He half recrossed the threshold. For the moment he understood the spirit of the Flagellants. Then something seemed to bar the way.

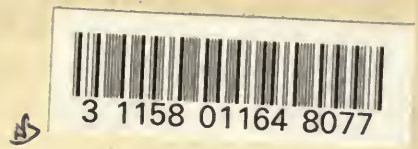
An old phrase wandered through his mind. Half unconsciously his lips repeated it: "The Flaming Sword!" He remembered The Rohan's arm stretched out across the doorway of his daughter's room. He shut the door softly and locked it, and followed his guests downstairs.

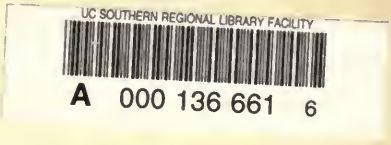
University of California Library
Los Angeles
This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

Phone Renewals
310/825-9188

JAN 17 2005

RECD YRL JAN 03 2005


3 1158 01164 8077


UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
A 000 136 661 6